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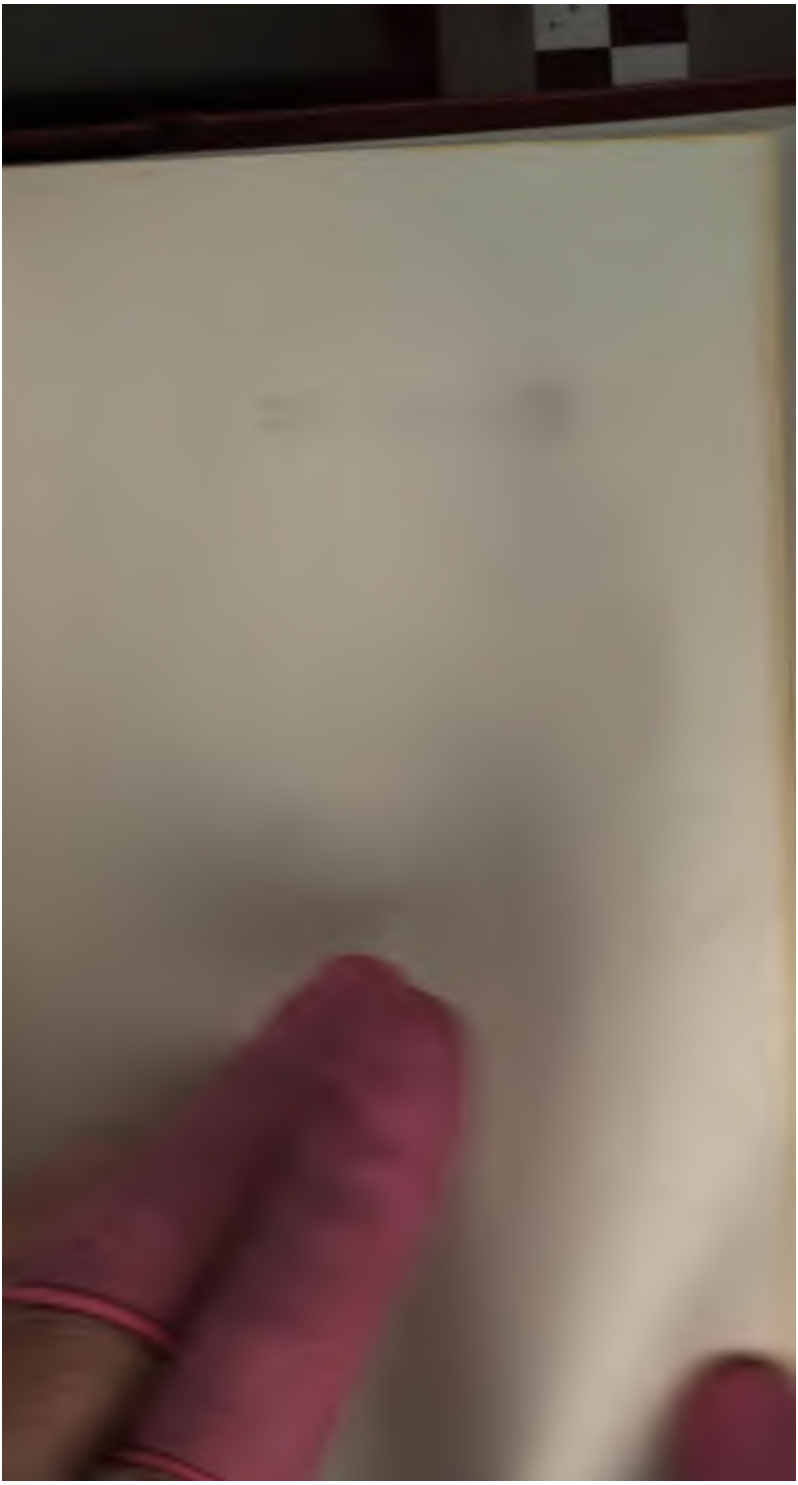

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WOMAN

IN

AMERICAN SOCIETY.

BY

Mrs (Louisa)

ABBA GOOLD WOOLSON.

Meliora sequamur

BOSTON:

ROBERTS BROTHERS.

1873.

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AMESBURY, 12 mo. 13, 1872.

MESSRS. ROBERTS BROTHERS:

I am glad to learn that you are about to publish a volume of essays by my friend ABBA G. WOOLSON. I read the papers as they first appeared with lively interest. They seemed to me gracefully written, yet with a certain robust strength, — wise, timely, and suggestive, — their language clear, felicitous, and pliant to the author's requirements.

Apart from their literary merit, as the well-considered words of a clear-sighted, healthful-minded woman, upon subjects of general interest, but especially relating to the opportunities, duties, and responsibilities, as well as the rights, of her sex, I cannot but believe they will find favor with a large class of readers.

I am very truly your friend,

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

TO THE READER.

THE series of papers comprising this volume aim to depict, as truthfully as may be, the successive phases of woman's life, as she passes from girlhood to mature age. It is not woman of the past, as she is portrayed in literature,—the glorified angel of the poets, or the enticing simpleton of the romancers,—whom they will be found to represent; but that living being who is puzzling us to-day with her strange contradictions, ruling society, as of old, with absolute caprices, while she questions keenly every principle upon which that society has been built.

For six thousand years woman has been man's constant companion upon this little planet; yet he seems to regard her as the one unknown quantity in his present calculations; and he has set himself to studying her of late with as fresh an interest as if she had just dropped from the skies. She comprehends herself scarcely better. Our age is the transition period of her history; when she halts midway between the fixed limitations of the past and the revealed possibilities of the future. With latent powers stirring within her, and a gaze lifted to nobler heights than she has yet trod, she stands irresolute before the new paths, cherishing in her heart a fondness for the old tradi-

tions, and adhering blindly to dogmas which the world around her has outgrown.

If, in pointing out some of the follies that still beset her, I have chosen to speak the sober words of truth rather than the dulcet flatteries she has been wont to hear, it is because I honor the native qualities which lie hidden beneath these poor disguises, and long to see her attain that ideal of true womanhood which must, ere long, hover within her grasp.

Our own country furnishes all the general conditions and influences most favorable to the kindly development of her powers; and she has already obtained from our people a measure of real respect and outward deference that is granted to her nowhere else. But while we are proud of institutions which can produce such results, let us not disdain to borrow from the social life of other nations whatever customs may prove more directly in accordance with the divine laws than any that we possess.

Those of my readers who have been familiar with the columns of the "Boston Journal" will recognize these essays as old acquaintances. Since the views here presented can no longer surprise them, they will be the more ready, I trust, to assent to opinions which may appear somewhat novel to others, but which are urged with so much ardor because I believe them so heartily.

A. G. W.

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WOMAN IN AMERICAN SOCIETY.

I.

THE SCHOOL-GIRL.

ONE must always regret that law of growth which renders it necessary that kittens should spoil into demure cats, and bright, joyous school-girls develop into the spiritless, crystallized beings denominated young ladies. For nowhere among women do we find such life, spontaneity, and intellectual ardor as we see in the school-girl, who passes her days amid books and in happy converse with her equals. She abounds in faults and crudities; but her very extravagances are refreshing, after the tame platitudes which meet us in the social world. The frank egotism, the exaggeration of trifles, the ignorance of all that we call tact and worldly knowledge which she displays, suggest only that happy freedom from conventional restraints in which she is privileged to dwell.

In the school-room she has a world of her own, whose customs are quite independent of outside

influences. Like the rest of her sex, she accepts the prevailing fashions in dress, but she appends thereto many little quirks and flourishes which must ever remain a mystery to the uninitiated. She fastens a tiny knot of ribbon to an ear-ring or a button-hole, gives a peculiar toss to her scarf-ends, and dips her hat-brim at an unexpected angle. On current literature she holds opinions which ignore entirely the judgment of critics. Certain pure-toned, sentimental novels go circulating up and down among her companions long after the world has forgotten them; and they are read and re-read with unabated delight. She would go through fire and water for any of her own sex who have made themselves famous in authorship; and there are a few literary heroes to whom she pays unstinted homage. She is sure to hear Curtis when he lectures, and still considers him the Adonis of literature; though the author of the "Howadji" and "The Potipher Papers" has been soaring of late almost beyond her ken, into the region of politics and reforms.

Her material tastes reveal themselves in a great fondness for pickled limes and special kinds of sweetmeats: a fresh supply of which is always furnished by generous mates, when lessons are over and they are free to regale themselves with earthly joys in the shape of gum-drops and taffy.

At such times our school-girl indulges in the most spirited discussions on her favorite topics; and is always ready to consider anew the respective claims of dark hair and light, blue eyes and black; though the dark invariably gets the advantage. After reading Latin poets awhile, she catches a little classic enthusiasm for the golden locks of the gods and goddesses, and is then willing to admit that a blonde among men may be tolerated. But the ideal hero, whose image she has built up in her mind from novels and romantic reveries and keeps for her private contemplation, has hair like the raven's wing, and dark, melting eyes; and is, moreover, possessed with an air of silent melancholy, very gloomy and mysterious, that seems to hint at a terrible experience in the past and an unlimited amount of remorse in the present. She hears propriety and goodness and amiability so often extolled, that she grows weary of the sound, and so she confers upon her hero enough of the opposite qualities to make him attractive. A spice of deviltry is added to his charms; and he becomes something of a brigand in nature and appearance, wearing a prodigious slouched hat over his massive brow, with a tall, lone feather streaming up from the band. Since there is no profession nor calling which would not make him appear humdrum and unromantic, he must lead a reckless, Robin Hood

sort of life, with no visible means of support, and no knowledge of income taxes and currency sixes. She is aware that modern society is very unfavorable to this style of gentry; but she likes to believe that he may still be met with, somewhere in the great world.

Of course she has no thought of marrying such a man; she declares, indeed, that she never intends to marry any one; but this is the hero who makes glorious the romances which she reads on Saturday afternoons, after her chemistry lessons are learned. That shrewd estimate of available attractions, that keen eye to the main chance, which, as an ornamental young lady, she will soon learn, does not belong to her now. The nice young man, who is always so proper and so polite, who smacks of a college education, a rich papa, and a finishing tour in Germany, who is heir expectant to several wealthy and dropsical old aunts, and has, besides, a snug desk in his father's counting-room, who has especial gifts for wearing yellow kids, sporting a moustache, twirling a cane, and offering delicate compliments with sweet obsequiousness, this pretty little man, the idol of her older sisters, the catch of the town, is her especial and unmitigated abhorrence. She delights in taking him off to her companions, describing him as "a pretty dear," "too foine to live," and "enough to kill;" and after-

ward she sums it all up in her sententious sobriquet of "Kids."

And it must be admitted that she considers the whole masculine sex, with one or two exceptions, as fair game for irreverent satire. Considering how completely the feeling is reversed in after life, it is interesting to note with what condescension she looks down upon men in general, and boys of her own age in particular, as quite inferior beings, whom she ought in kindness to patronize, but who are made by nature irreclaimable Calibans. Their physical awkwardness, their slowness of comprehension, their well-meant, blundering compliments are a source to her of inextinguishable laughter, when she is fairly beyond their hearing. In the High Schools, where she reads the Iliad and Ænead in their classes, she waits with a grand and patient benignity for their dull intellects to come floundering after her elegant renderings, through the sonorous lines. At that time she never suspects the masculine mind to be of that vastly superior quality which its owners assert it to be afterward, when they are safe in their colleges and professions, beyond the chance of feminine competition.

She keeps aloof from these boyish students outside the recitations, as becomes a superior being, but maintains in general the most pleasant relations with all about her. If determined to lead her

class at the end of the term, it is to be only by honest labor performed in secret, and her laurels are worn without arrogance. In her little democracy, she is always ready to bow down before intellect or scholarship superior to her own.

Now and then she has violent misunderstandings with her companions, and wears, in consequence, a face of relentless wrath for half a day; but the storm blows over without leaving a cloud. Her friendships are all-absorbing; and on leaving school she indulges in such vows of constancy to her dearest friend, that one would think it was a case of Damon and Pythias in petticoats. Little does she imagine that in two short years after that tearful parting on Graduation Day she will have learned to pass her dearest Araminta with a chilling bow, and even to speak of her as that dowdy Miss Jones. Her social leaders will have taught her then that one woman may forgive another any thing but positive crime and being a dowdy.

The love of secrecy that she manifests would do credit to a diplomate. Trifling incidents are imparted to her school-mates under a pledge of perpetual silence, sufficiently awful and impressive for initiating a member of a Masonic Lodge. If women in after-life show an aversion to keeping secrets, it is because they became thoroughly weary of the unprofitable task in their younger days.

Within the school-room, in spite of long lessons and strict rules, she leads, for the most part, an enjoyable life; but in the world outside her trouble begins. There, all people seem banded together to annoy and restrain her. She has in her veins a healthy, bounding life, which longs for fun and excitement; but so many dreadful prophecies are told her about romps and tom-boys and whistling girls, so many instructions given about what is lady-like and proper, that she feels compelled to repress all her wild longings. Do whatever she will, she is always shocking the family nerves; and were one half her desires for active sport to become known, she would expect her mother and aunts to be struck dumb with horror at the depravity of her tastes. When quietly hemming ruffles in a parlor arm-chair on holiday afternoons, sitting upright, with feet uncrossed upon the carpet, according to the domestic Hoyle, and looking the very pink of propriety, she is imagining, even then, what jolly fun it would be to rig up in her gymnasium suit and bound off with her brothers to a game of ball, or on a nutting expedition in the chestnut woods; and were her heart's desire to be made known on winter evenings, when she is crouched over the furnace register with her book, it would be to strap on her skates and go speeding up the frozen river for

miles, with the full moon sailing up in the east, and the dark shadows of the bank stretching along on either hand. She fancies it must be prime sport to watch the boys cut holes in the river ice for setting pickerel lines; and even to ride outside with the engineer, when they start for the mountains on their summer vacation. If she were a boy, she would do these things, and all other great and illustrious deeds; but she long ago discovered, as she thinks, that girls can never amount to any thing. It seems quite natural that they should always wish that they were boys, and not at all strange that no boy was ever heard to wish that he were a girl.

Destiny is represented as such a stern, hard-featured dame, that she never dreams of shaking a puny fist in her face. Natural tastes are perpetually warring against her lot, to be sure, but there is one comforting doctrine which explains it, and that is total depravity. It coincides with her own experience, that the heart is prone to evil and desperately wicked. So she accepts self-abnegation as the lot of woman, meted out to her from the beginning, and she never questions it. Why she should stay at home on Saturday afternoon, sewing buttons on brother Joe's shirts, without even his privilege of swearing over them, while the said Joe is off triumphing in a

grand base-ball match, which she would give her head to see, never comes up to her mind for explanation, any more than why evil is allowed to exist in the world, when good might just as well have been put in its place. The question, "Why is this thus?" would receive from her a most prompt and comprehensive answer, — Because it is.

If there be one habit which well-bred relatives detest beyond any other, it is the use of a certain kind of language which they denominate slang; and if there be one in which the school-girl especially delights, it is that. It is not low and vulgar slang that she affects, for the native delicacy of her mind leads her to avoid any thing really coarse, but those vigorous, unrecognized expressions which mean so much more than all the set phrases she finds in her grammar, and which are all the dearer to her because they have no flavor of books about them.

After reciting all day in the most correct and classic English at her command, she revels in a disregard of precedents, and dashes off her ideas in few and resounding epithets. Her exuberant feelings demand for their expression only the most intense superlatives. Simple adjectives are discharged from her service, as too tame for burning thoughts. Nothing can be to her merely good or bad; it is either perfectly magnificent or as horrid

as it can be. One epithet there is which appears to be always appropriate, and preserves its glow and fulness when others become stale, and that is her favorite "splendid." It does duty on all occasions, and never fails to interpret her emotions.

Of course, with such constant wear and tear, all extravagances become threadbare in time, and then she resorts to a misapplication of terms for the desired effect. Pretty ribbons are "stunning;" she finds her new studies "jolly;" and has "gorgeous" times at the Fair. When this fails, and speech is beggared once more, she resorts to new creations of her own that never saw a dictionary, nor were uttered by lips profane, but which seem to her none the worse for that. She knows no reason why "the well of English undefiled" should be done bubbling now; and though Messrs. Worcester and Webster may count up all the words to be discovered in literature, she is sure that somebody had to manufacture them in the beginning, to express his needs, and she claims the same right for herself. So she coins queer, heathenish epithets, which never fail to adorn her bursts of descriptive eloquence when the audience is appreciative. Their spelling is a matter of individual conjecture, and their meaning no words can define. She has one such adjective — "geloptious" — that

no one ever found in book or paper; but when she utters it, it is with a die-away expression of delight and rapture, like that the painters give to St. Cecilia. She stigmatizes a long lesson as a "tremender;" and when she appears in her new walking-suit, she informs her class-mates that she is out in her "swelly rig," and they declare it to be "jimmy" and "splufous." Pardon me, dear little word-mongers, if I am irreverent to print them; there are many others, endeared by long use, that I keep treasured in my heart.

But our school-girl knows full well that these must all be banished to outer darkness when she crosses the threshold of home. She has come to grief so often by introducing their barbaric splendors, that, like the political orator, she keeps two sets of expressions for use in different situations. Teachers, parents and older sisters must be addressed in Addisonian phrase; but only to congenial souls, who feel, like her, the force of originality, does she pour out the riches of her untutored speech.

By and by, when all the vigor and freedom of her youth are past, and her days are spent on parlor sofas, discharging the trivial duties of a young lady in society, she will confine herself to two unexceptionable epithets, — "very nice" and "very unfortunate;" and innocent expletives and violent superlatives will alike give place to well-con-

structed phrases, as flat, stale, and unprofitable as the life she will lead while using them. Then good, honest Saxon speech will give her a shiver, like a blast of the outer air: and unless the edge of language be taken off, in synonymes made from French or Latin, she will consider it wholly unfit for her delicate mind.

We may forgive the school-girl for all perversions of her mother-tongue save one, and that is the liberty she takes with her own goodly Christian name. She resents nothing so much as an attempt to give this appellation in full. The queenly Elizabeths and Catherines, the noble Margarets and Helens, with all their historic and family associations, are sunk without a pang in the vapid, characterless Lizzies and Katies, the Maggies and Nellies, which appear so absurd on the grave, printed page. Such abbreviations will do for the daily intercourse of friends; but even then we may query whether the expression of endearment implied in their contraction and French ending does not come with better grace from another than the owner; and whether it be not out of taste to sign one's own name in such affectionate, caressing fashion, even in a familiar note. But however this may be, no one can read down the register of girls' names in any school-catalogue, with its inevitable call-me-pet-names-dearest air,

without wondering that teachers, as well as school-girls, should be so lost to all sense of the purity of the English tongue, and the honor and dignity of the female sex. If women are ever to go to Congress, or to command respect on starting in the career and professions to which they aspire, they must have something more substantial to append Honorable and Doctor and Reverend to, than the Tinnies and Mamies and Lulus to which they now so pertinaciously cling. These might form a sufficiently serious nomenclature for butterflies or elves, or the pets of an Eastern harem, who are supposed to have no souls; but they can never be rendered illustrious, nor honorable, nor even impregnated with any flavor of individual life.

But all arguments fail to convince the school-girl of this folly. When she has made up her mind on any subject it is made up effectually, and she admits no possibility of change. She forms at once the most pronounced opinions upon every question that presents itself to her mind. That filmy, nebulous state, through which matter is said to pass before globing itself into the solid planet, finds no correspondence in the shaping of her ideas. No haze nor hesitation retard their complete expression; they leap, like some crystals, into perfect form at a shock. She would be decided as to the origin of evil, the author of the Junius

Letters, or the assailant of Billy Patterson, one minute after those questions were given her to consider.

She decides upon characters with equal promptness, and fancies that she has read them at a glance. All persons whom she meets are divided into two classes, — those she loves and those she hates; and she allows no virtues in the one, nor faults in the other. Saint or Satan, glory or misery, are the opposite poles around which all natures and conditions range themselves. That utter indifference to the majority of people, which older hearts profess and feel, she can never understand.

Her opinions are not defended by arguments; she only feels them to be true. Reasons and confirmatory facts she may have, but they are blinked out of sight, as unworthy a sibyl who would have us believe that she acts from divination, in a manner incomprehensible to ordinary mortals. It is only later in life that she learns to resent the common masculine talk about woman's instincts, as an attempt to deprive her of all credit for her actions, by allying her with bees, beavers, and other curious creatures, who work after a pattern set them in the Garden of Eden.

The forces within her she understands so little that she believes herself a curious anomaly in the

world, a singular and hitherto unnoted specimen of the human race. Her peculiar experiences and mental traits form a never-ending subject for her discourse; and yet she fancies that she must remain a complete riddle to her acquaintances, a being whose actions and thoughts are no more to be reckoned on than the returns of a new comet. A knowledge of human nature, tables of averages and general deductions, after the manner of Buckle, will do for the world at large; but this modern little sphinx will laugh them to scorn when you would apply them to her. Yard-sticks are good in their places, but how can they measure the Northern Lights or the course of a Will o' the Wisp?

We smile at the school-girl's foibles, but love her for them the more; for they are born of that enthusiasm and earnestness which belong only to youth, and which older hearts sigh for in vain. As we pass her on the street, holding close her armful of well-thumbed books, and tossing her head in a gale of laughter over a companion's joke, we feel that our world is the cheerier for so bright a presence. It would be useless, however, to tell her that she is seeing her happiest days. She has heard that statement many times already, and receives it with the incredulous smile of one who believes her trials too peculiar to be easily

understood or explained. Whenever she escapes from hard lessons, compositions, and strict laws, she is sure that all succeeding time will be one period of blissful ease; for she can then dream away her days without noting whether it be nine o'clock or two; and can enjoy evening sports with no ghostly vision of an unlearned algebra lesson rising before her at her banquet scenes. Graduation Day is the rainbow arch through which she is to pass into a life of joyous freedom and unrestrained delight. May the future prove to her as bright and glorious as she pictures it in her youthful dreams!

II.

AFTER GRADUATION.

WHEN our young lady steps forth to receive her well-earned diploma on that last day at school, she realizes with a sudden pang that school-days are indeed over. The boys of her class, who are to advance at once to the halls of a distant college, seem like favored beings, privileged to drink of higher fountains than are allowed to girls. But she consoles herself with a vision of the glorious leisure which is to be hers; and believes that then she will surely find time and opportunity for acquiring a knowledge of history, art, literature, and all the other subjects concerning which she feels so deplorably ignorant.

For a few months it appears, indeed, delightful to have leisure to visit neglected friends; to superintend a new and finer wardrobe; and to initiate herself into the manners and customs of that social world which she has been taught to consider her peculiar province, and for which, as she was told on Graduation Day, her past studies have been merely a preparation.

But she finds herself strangely out of place in this proper sphere, and fails to discover how the years spent in thumbing big dictionaries and ferreting out Latin rules have been fitting her for the duties of her destined life. Here, surely, Greek verbs are at a discount; no one talks to her about an aorist or hints at the Binomial theorem; no one seems to care whether she belongs to the Silurian or the Tertiary period. The girl who dropped out of her classes two years ago and left school disheartened, because she was not blessed with brains enough for study, and who was pitied as an inferior being, doomed to life-long mortification, bursts upon her in this new domain, smiling and regnant; and in presence of her airy self-possession, her ready repartees, her graceful manœuvres to effect sly purposes, our little graduate finds herself admiring a superior being.

"Since intellect goes for nothing, and externals for every thing, why then," she asks, "was not small talk, coquetry, and unabashed assurance under all compliments taught us at school? Why did we not write notes of invitation, instead of compositions; and practise bows and hand-shakings, instead of flinging bean-bags at each other's heads to develop our muscles? This is the knowledge that would have fitted us for the new sphere to which we are called."

But being keen-eyed and observant, she soon exchanges her feeling of awkwardness and abject ignorance for one of happy confidence; and she learns to coin piquant little speeches at short notice, which carry her prosperously through every embarrassment.

When at length these social duties no longer puzzle and absorb her, she becomes aware that the higher faculties of her nature find in them no recognition nor employment. From the midst of busy idleness and petty engagements, she looks back with regret to the labors of the past, and feels that life has somehow lost a charm. She misses the healthful walks each day to school, the cordial greetings of merry friends at morning, the pleasant rivalries in mental contests, the new ideas, the activity, the good cheer, which her former life gave.

The duties that surround her now are too trifling; they seem in no way to provide for that intellectual side of her nature which she has been training since childhood, and in which, hitherto, she has found her delight. The associates whom she meets are no longer the breezy, genial companions of her school-hours; they are engrossed in insipidities; they prate of nothing but ruffles and ribbons, parties and beaux. The young gentlemen who talk with her offer heartless compliments in a

way that make them seem an insult to her sense: older men drop at once from the interesting discourse to which she had been covertly listening, and converse patronizingly upon the weather and the last concert. She is sadly conscious of unused, undeveloped powers, and all the influences about her tend only to shrivel them; nowhere does an opportunity offer for their exercise and growth.

She has, it may be, the finest clothing, the best food, the pleasantest rooms she can hope to procure; and were she only an animal, might pass her days in calm content. But that hunger of the soul, that craving for a nobler, more active life, will not let her rest in a mere material paradise. Her father, indeed, would never expect his sons to be satisfied with such a lot; he would not require them to dawdle about his counting-room, helping him in little errands and duties, as she helps her mother at home. He would preach energy, ambition, self-support, as their first duty; and would exert himself to give them a start in some honorable, promising profession. But his daughter, at the same age, is expected to drop at once all studious efforts, all hope of further progress, and to sit holding her hands, without any desire to improve the present or forecast the future.

She envies her brothers the start they make toward independence and an honorable career; for she, too, would like to earn money of her own, instead of asking for it each day, as if it were a charity; she would like a regular income, to apportion according to her tastes; she would like, also, to feel herself growing stronger and wiser; and to look forward to some continuous work, in which her education and abilities might seem of definite use. The petty household duties assigned her she does not despise; but while spending her young days in dusting parlors, arranging tables, and making cake, she cannot but ask if that be an economy of life which employs her mental abilities and cultivated powers to do what every good servant-girl is ready to perform for half a dollar a day. The world, she thinks, should have some better work for the thousands of educated, ambitious girls who yearly graduate from our schools, ready and eager to enter upon the highest duties appropriate to their age.

These thoughts fill her quiet hours with a vague, incessant longing, which no one cares to understand. Her father wishes to be just and kind; — but she feels that it would be as hopeless to express such sentiments to him, as to explain a theory of caloric to a Mohawk warrior. Yet the longing remains, all the more real for being

husband; and that to do this she must pretend all the while to be doing something else. Her girlish ideas of love still cling to her; she believes it to be a sudden revelation sent from heaven, without seeking or contriving of her own. She would as soon sit down at Stamboul, amid a row of helpless slaves, waiting till some purchaser should come along and fancy her, if for once the scope and purpose of her present life were made plain to her sight.

But, gradually, for lack of better employment, she is led to practise the arts and cultivate the ideas of young ladies about her; she devotes, more and more, her mornings to dressing and her evenings to flirting; for in such frivolities she finds the only thing to vary monotonous days. The constant talk about gentlemen, the excitement over each new engagement, the stir at a wedding, the ridicule of all old maids, produce their effect. Soon she does her best to become like those about her, and to have no wants which they cannot supply; and then farewell for ever to our buoyant, frank, earnest-hearted little school-girl. The strong current of our fashionable society has swept her down, as it has many another noble young soul, from pure aspirations, lofty hopes, and generous heart-throbs, to petty designing, to narrow self-seeking, to a shameless

offering of herself to the highest bidder in that matrimonial market.

O my sisters, still young and true-hearted, bear up a little longer, and a nobler life shall be yours! You stand looking forward toward the glory and glow of wide, cloud-hung heavens, all aflush with the climbing splendors and rosiness of a sunrise; do not turn down into the mist and damp of trodden valleys, with languid eye and despairing heart! Earnest men and women are everywhere struggling for your sakes, that your paths may continue glorious, leading ever upward toward serener heights. Shut your ears to the whisperings of this social world, which seeks to debase all that you have held precious; and still believe it possible to live a progressive life. Be willing to perform much labor for those around you, rewarded only by the consciousness of doing good; but remember that to your own individual life you owe duties of culture and advancement, beyond all that others claim. Wait patiently, if wait you must, for that opportunity for which you long; but never stagnate in the sloth of drawing-room ease. Study intently; keep your minds earnest and interested in the great march of events; preserve, by activity, the vigor and buoyant spirits of physical health; and thus shall you be made ready to enter upon that continuous work, now

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III.

ORNAMENTAL YOUNG LADIES.

THERE is one specimen of feminine humanity which promises, in course of time, to become extinct. The causes are at work in society which must hereafter render our ornamental young lady a rare bird; if not, like the Dodo, a creature belonging wholly to the past, yet one as seldom met with as a Least Bittern. Certain dangerous doctrines have been preached of late, which have not been duly limited and explained; such as the dignity of labor and the duty of self-reliance. Our lecturers enforce these as if they were of universal application; and forget to emphasize the fact that in existing communities masculine and feminine virtues still form two distinct classes. And so the young ladies who listen, in their innocence and sincerity, are beginning to take all virtues to themselves; and even to carry them out to remote and unwarrantable sequences. This would do no harm as a matter of abstract belief; but when the dear charmers — to whom, in their sweet do-nothing leisure, we looked for the poetry

and picturesqueness of life — attempt to put their ideas into practice, as they seem now to be doing, we begin to dread the bread-and-butter aspect which the future will wear.

In the past, fair woman was content to sit behind castle windows and see her brave knight ride forth to conquest; to wave him a merry good-bye from her lofty casement, and watch for the last shake of his bridle rein, as he vanished over the plain. Then she turned to weave tapestries with her handmaidens; and to listen at eventide to the minstrels, who had wandered to her door with their ballads of love and war. And so she sat and sang in her bower, till the knight came riding back, with battered shield and the spoils of victory. As she removed his heavy armor, she asked few questions about his exploits, and knew not the details of those doughty deeds which he had just wrought with his strong right arm. That he had returned proud and well was all she cared to know.

But this happy reign of domestic order and content seems hastening to its end. Now, lovely woman not only insists upon going up to the battlements, that she may discern from afar every movement in the eager fray, but she herself would fain descend into the plain, and, standing as near as may be to the beloved combatants, cheer them

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she might ever dwell in peace and repose, if she had not made up her mind to accept no peace and repose until the world shall be made ready to sit down at the feast. Life in the moated grange begins to grow somewhat stale and insipid to her now; and, if only for the sake of novelty, she is resolved to venture out, and try her hand at deeds of high emprise.

And thus it is that the ornamental young ladies, those who aspire to no dangerous heights, who sigh for no career, and are content to pass their placid days in a round of petty pursuits, are becoming fewer year by year. They are still left to us, however, in considerable numbers. We meet them everywhere in drawing-rooms, and always feel soothed by their presence, without stopping to wonder how such an existence as theirs has become endurable.

They are delightful little bodies, for the most part; at peace with all things about them, and seeming to purr softly through their sleepy existence like contented kittens. Their idea of bliss is to rest on deep, silken cushions, with plenty of dainties to eat, warm coverings, and no need to bestir themselves. Energy and labor they consider very nice and useful and all that, for great, rude men, who can do nothing else, and who, by a wise provision of nature, were sent into the world to provide them with comforts. That is what

fathers and husbands and brothers are for. And they themselves were made to braid Christmas slippers, and stitch cigar-cases, for gentlemen friends; to hem their handkerchiefs; sing to them evenings; and otherwise to wait gracefully upon mankind.

Duty to papa consists in putting his slippers near the grate before he comes home; in laying his evening paper where he will see it; and in reading to him the price of stocks, the President's message, and the last quotations from foreign markets;—matters which are about as lucid to their intellects as were the Greek and Hebrew lines to Milton's daughters, when they read them to the blind poet. But the little martyrs are quite content to go through the world hedged about with mysteries, not the least of which is politics; which they suppose to be a sort of black art, comprehensible only to elderly men, who are always wrangling over it disagreeably and unaccountably, when they might, if they chose, be telling the news and saying pleasant things.

Another mystery is the recent discussion about women, which they think is somehow very ill-bred and unfortunate. They have heard of dreadful, unladylike creatures, who go around to conventions in bloomers, talking like men, and creating a disturbance; and they wonder that the police

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do not take care of them. For their part, they have all the rights they care for, or know any thing about; and so long as gentlemen pick up their handkerchiefs gallantly, and say "*Après vous*" blandly at doorways, they see no need of quarrelling about birthrights. When any one chances in their hearing to start the unpleasant theme, they refrain from a reply, and sidle off gradually to another part of the room, where the atmosphere is more congenial. They consider that the first duty of woman is to be agreeable to gentlemen; and they fancy themselves most charming when helpless and inefficient, and in urgent need of a protector. If cast away upon a desert island, we cannot conceive of their existing beyond a day. They have numberless frights and perils, for the earth is the abiding place of many spiders and robbers, and without defenders they must perish.

In later life they may become sharp and angular, and disposed to consider number one; but at the period of which we write, which is that of their fresh, happy youth, they are blithe and tender and reliant; pleasant to contemplate as opening rosebuds on a bright May morning. If they are over-inclined to be gushing and affectionate, to greet lady-friends with a kiss when gentlemen are near, and to wear their hearts at all times on their sleeve, these are foibles that can be pardoned

in a world generally harsh and unloving. When wiser people puzzle and weary us, and we grow tired of facing so many knotty problems, we turn gladly from the brilliant talk to discuss with them the lovely weather, and to pay them pretty compliments, sure that they will confront us with no unexpected posers, nor open up any chimerical reforms.

Reforms, indeed, are the last thing they meditate. Human institutions, to their minds, are fixed facts; incapable of upheaval by any agency less potent and material than a Lisbon earthquake. To acquiesce and to submit, whatever the fates have willed, is their only wisdom.

They sip daintily of the sweets of life, and know not that the waters of Marah must be daily drink for many souls. Through occasional charity sermons they get glimpses of the wicked, ravenous, ignorant world without; of the hungry thousands half-starved in city cellars for lack of work and Christian care; of benighted souls rushing to crime for want of kindly teachers and guides; of the naked in mind and body waiting everywhere to be clothed; and though they believe it must be in some distant Borrio-boola-Gha, yet for all that it is very disagreeable to think of; and they wonder why people cannot be good and wise and behave themselves. If the poor are starving

for bread, why cannot they eat plum-cake, — asked their royal sister, when the French mobs came clamoring to her palace gates. But the most they can do about it is to drop their alms into the contribution-box, — not so big a sum as it would have been had not the new set of "point" cost so much the day before.

But though they make it a virtue to be helpless and inefficient, they are by no means idle, if you will allow their definition of the term. They never sit with hands folded in their laps, staring into vacancy, not they. They have many trifling labors in hand, which seem to them most important, without which they are sure the world would turn the wrong way on its axis. Besides their duties to papa and their brothers, of which we have spoken, they are often concerned in some enterprise for fairs, in dressing dolls, or making paper-roses or letters of evergreen, under somebody's guidance. And they jerk tiny ivory shuttles in and out white threads held taut over their fingers; and have mind and soul absorbed in counting the flying stitches. To make "tatting" is the supreme end and aim of their existence, when nothing else hurries them. Of course they have a mamma, who has to spend half her days in the lower regions with Bridget and Kate, that the world above stairs may be kept in

running order; and now and then they descend from their domain of the parlor to stir up golden compounds in this lower world, under the eye of its presiding deities, which shall be heralded at the tea-table as pound-cake of their manufacture. But meat and bread, and the coarser viands, they leave to profane hands.

Then they dawdle over music lessons every morning, and delight to practise gay snatches from Offenbach, and the last college songs, with which they are ready to edify evening callers on the slightest provocation.

Accepting, as they do, the oak-and-vine theory as regards man and woman, they make no attempt to stand erect without support, but swing wide their graceful tendrils in every breeze, if haply they may find some oak to cling to. And as years roll by, their energies are given wholly to the absorbing pursuit. Though fully intending to be models in matrimonial duties, they can spare no time beforehand to prepare for their discharge. The opening line of Mrs. Glass's famous cookery receipt — First catch your hare — has ever seemed to them the embodiment of sense; and when once they have made sure of an available husband, upon whose name and fortune they shall rise to ease and social power, it will be time enough to think of their earthly life to come.

Till then, the first care must be their attire; for they have slight faith in the old saying, that grandmothers are daily preaching to maidenly ears, about beauty unadorned. Who was ever more beautiful than the divine Helen? and yet did she not adorn herself with a veil wrought about with the yellow acanthus, the gift of her mother Leda? Mothers, at least, preached no such doctrine in ancient days. And thus many devices are used to beautify the fresh young face that Nature has blessed them with,—mother Nature, who had always a tender spot in her heart for young people, and has ever given them of her best. The wary birds, in whose sight these innocent traps are spread, may understand them perfectly, but will surely be caught in the bright meshes, so long as love and beauty go hand in hand over the earth.

But woe to our poor ornament, if no rich lover comes suing for her hand. She has staked every thing on the success of one scheme, and drear must be her lot if it fails. As years roll on, her airy accomplishments can give little solace, with no one sitting by to admire; her charms must depart, one by one, leaving nothing in their place; her empty mind holds no treasures that can cheer the lonely hours; her cunning fingers are skilled at no handicraft that can secure for her a livelihood, when the aid of father and friends

shall cease. Can it be that she will ever drift, in her last days, into one of our homes for aged and indigent women, — those harbors of refuge for wrecked and useless lives whose continuance has become a burden to friends? May Heaven forbid! and always send relatives to maintain her and lovers to praise!

For it is no fault of hers that her life has been made what it is. She has carried out that theory which society told her was the only true and proper one to accept. Since she is a mere vine, with no strength or support in herself, and since no oak grew near for her to cling to, there can be nothing left but to trail in the dust.

And now, when so many of her sisters are bent on coming out from their seclusion, and winning from the world, work, fame, and fortune, like their brothers, let us cherish her presence, while it lasts, as a relic of that picturesque past, when there were knights and ladies and castle-windows, and Lion-heart was king; when the knights rode gaily forth, through squalid villages, to do chivalrous deeds in foreign lands; and the ladies sat all day in their moated bowers, weaving pansies into lovers' scarfs, and singing madrigals; while the peasants below starved and quarreled in wretchedness and rags.

IV.

THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

IN a gentleman's education, the accomplishments have always been considered as merely a crown and elegant finish to solid learning and abilities well trained for carrying on the serious business of life. So long as war was made his chief occupation, and bravery his greatest virtue, they comprised those sparkling graces of mind and manner, that skill in sports and tournaments, which fitted him to shine at the court of his sovereign, in the idle intervals of peace. Chaucer draws for us the picture of such an accomplished young squire of his own day, as exquisite a gallant as one would wish to see, with his curled locks and embroidered cloak, his driving and singing and fluting, his painting and sonneteering; but, with all this, he was no mere lady's man, for his strength and activity were something wonderful; and he had, moreover, served in foreign wars, and borne him well, the poet tells us, "in hope to standen in his lady's grace." To these he

added certain other virtues unknown to the swells of our day, for he was "lowly and serviceable, and carved before his father at the table." We fear the heroes of modern drawing-rooms would cut but a sorry figure beside this redoubtable young squire of four centuries ago; for in place of the many fascinations in which he prided himself, and which have fallen so sadly into disuse, but two new arts seem to have enriched the masculine repertoire, — that of smoking, and of immoderate lounging at clubs.

Very different has been the world's estimate of the value of accomplishments in the education of woman. No thorough and continuous training has been thought necessary to precede them; and no knowledge, except that of the most limited and elementary character. They have not been held as a mere polish to solid acquirements, but as a substitute for them. While young men have been urged by the institutions of their country to develop and strengthen their natural powers, whether physical or mental, by every available means, young women have been discouraged from doing the same, by whatever influence the State and society could bring to bear. To stimulate the minds of boys, and to restrain and weaken the minds of girls, has been the office of all governments since the world began. These have

been pleased to allow to women the superficial arts, provided they could manage to acquire them by their own efforts: but any aspirations which they might feel for a deeper, fuller draught of wisdom have been as carefully repressed as if they tended to the ruin of mankind. Shrewd old Thomas Fuller reflects a time-honored opinion, when he declares that "learning in a woman is but little to be prized;" though he admits it may be necessary for princesses and queens; and the Mrs. Malaprops of fashionable society have ever been ready to assure its Sir Anthonys that "so much learning does not become a young woman." Any girl in whom Nature had unfortunately implanted a love for study, and who had indulged it in the leisure of solitary hours, has been fain to hide her intelligence, as a brilliant woman once said she did hers, with as much solicitude as she would hide crookedness or lameness. In the light accomplishments of the day she might be proud to excel; but to pass beyond these into other realms was to incur the dreadful suspicion of being a blue.

It is easy to account for a state of things from which our sex have so grievously suffered. One fond delusion which man has hitherto cherished, and with which he is even now loath to part, has been the belief that woman was made

expressly for him; and that she lived to beguile his leisure hours and assist him in his toil. To his thought she has never been, first of all, a woman in her own right; but always a prospective mistress or housekeeper in his right. To claim his privilege to choose her own work, and to fit herself for it in her own way, by striving to avail herself of the best instruction given in the schools, would be to fly in the face of Providence, and to defy her destiny in a manner too impious to be allowed. So the theory holds, that as she exists for others, her education must be made to contribute to their pleasure and benefit, and not her own. Even Rousseau, who, more than most men, could free himself from the hampering of conventional thought, and who prided himself on following no precepts but those that Nature taught, decides the training of his imaginary pupil Sophie by consulting solely the advantage to accrue to his young paragon Emile, whose wife she is to be; for woman, he assumes, like all his predecessors, is, and ought to be, subject to man.

And the sexes are like races, who, when they find themselves by force of circumstances holding others in any bondage, however slight, endeavor to convince themselves of the mental inferiority of those others, as a justification, and

to fancy that they are carrying out the manifest designs of the Creator by keeping them in leading-strings. Many and conflicting have been the views held concerning the vices and virtues of woman; but all ages have agreed in an apparent belief in her deficient intellectual capacity, and her inability to cope with the greatest problems of thought. Hence, they have concluded, we must dole out to her only those draughts of knowledge which her mind is capable of receiving, and see that she strays into no paths but those she is fitted to tread. It is an amusing inconsistency which never seems to have struck them. If this limitation of her powers to any one sphere be Nature's provision and not theirs, why should there be need of so many precautions to keep her from the higher walks of service and learning from which she has been debarred? If women cannot but fail therein, one would think that no surer way could be devised for convincing the world of this, than by furnishing the spectacle of actual failures which have been committed. One man may assert that another cannot lift as many pounds as he; but if he takes good care that he shall never touch the weight, we may be unable to refute his statement, but we may well suspect the sincerity of his own faith in its truth.

That this belief in the mental inferiority of

woman has existed since remotest time we know; but if this proves its justness, it proves, likewise, that slavery cannot be wrong, and that kings rule by divine right; and it would warrant the Celestial in maintaining without scruple that his sister is a soulless being, and a proper article of trade. Perhaps Adam himself was to blame for its origin; and, indeed, we can believe almost any ungallant thing of him, who, when he had eaten the apple, lacked honor enough to suffer for it like a man, and to protect his companion; but, like a coward, did his best to throw the blame upon her, and to screen himself at her expense.

While believing, as we do, that woman has by nature a mind as good, a body as strong and serviceable for its work, as those with which her brother man has been endowed; and that the mental frivolity and physical weakness by which she has been judged are the results of an artificial training which society has imposed upon her; we are yet quite ready to allow that the showy acquirements which have made this defective training of the past possess in themselves a charm that cannot well be spared from the world. Nor need we fear that any education, however thorough and systematic, nor any occupations, however engrossing, will ever eradicate that love of beauty which seems inherent in her being, leading her

to delight in all harmonies, whether of sound, motion, color, or shape, and to strive to reproduce them in the objects around her. Though a dabbling in water-colors and a trilling of operatic airs should no longer be held as proper atonement for shallow thoughts, discursive arguments, and an avowed ignorance concerning all the science, politics, and literature of the day, it does not follow that painting and music, as amateur arts, must be banished to the shades. We can conceive it possible that a young lady shall be acquainted with the late discoveries of the chemists, the present state of European governments, and the newest translation of the classics, and yet excel in her dancing, and be able to awaken the melodies of Beethoven for the entertainment of her friends. Indeed, she cannot fail to do these things with greater precision and ease, when some previous discipline of mind shall aid her in their acquirement.

Accomplishments ought, however, to be tried by some higher standard than now prevails; and those only be awarded the name which tend to, or imply, some skill and elegance in mind or body. Mere mechanical copying of another's work, without the need of attentive thought, should rank so low as to be held unworthy a mind capable of original effort; and any art which

requires a constrained position and in-door air for its exercise should yield the place of honor to those whose results are not only pleasing, but which tend, also, to invigorate the bodily powers.

Girls must be led to seek in their leisure hours more profitable diversions than the fancy-work which now engrosses their time and disfigures our parlor-walls and mantels. Needle-work and gewgaws, produced at the expense of the eyesight, the health, and the intelligence of their daughters, should be thought by parents too costly ornaments to hang in their houses. But to sketch in the open air and to delight in horticulture would confer a taste for the beauties of nature and the excellence of art; and bring, at the same time, color and roundness to the cheeks.

Neither are natural aptitude and individual tastes sufficiently consulted in the choice of these trifling pursuits. Fashionable mammas wish their daughters to shine in society as accomplished young ladies; and to this end all the superficial arts in favor at the time must be acquired, without thought of discrimination. Their girls must play the piano and sing and paint, whatever bent Nature may have given to their minds. As a consequence of this, they pursue no branch long enough to understand or love it; and despite all their labored roulades, their lessons in oils, and

their scribblement of French exercises, they close the piano after their wedding-day, wash their paint-brushes, and put by their grammars, as though the end was gained whenever an available suitor had succumbed to their charms. If the hours thus frittered away had been given to any one congenial pursuit, the result might have been a commendable excellence in this for the time being, and the possession of a specialty which could be developed, in after years, into a source of happiness, wealth, or fame. Those artistic performances upon which the young ladies of our polite society rely for drawing-room display, even if skilfully executed, must soon weary from their trite uniformity; but when half-learned, as they usually are, and paraded with shuffling inaccuracy to eyes and ears accustomed to the finish and exactness of professional exhibitions, they serve any purpose but that of pleasing. Even young Dundreary becomes oppressed by such inevitable charms, and declares all the fine girls of his set to be stupid bores.

Better than a sameness of indifferent graces, would be accomplishments as singular as those which won for Sophy Streatfield the title of "the charming S. S." in the gifted circle at Mrs. Thrale's. Too ignorant and dull to be accused of either learning or wit, she could yet construe

Homer like a college don; and she had the power of shedding floods of genuine tears at any moment, for the delectation of her friends. The warbling young ladies about her have long been forgotten, but she has won the immortality of remembrance solely by her Greek and her tears. In our social life, where all damsels are as sure to be accomplished as the wives of government-officials in newspaper-reports, and where these accomplishments are as uniform as if human minds, like bullets, were run in the same mould, we sigh to behold one person who shall do something which nobody else does, and do it well.

No art seems more worthy universal culture than music; and if a decided taste leads to it, youth and money may be spent in its pursuit; but since so few are really fitted to attain to any thing like excellence, we may ask why the daughter of every well-to-do family should be kept thrumming at the piano during golden hours of every week, when the work is repugnant to her soul, and when, with the most persistent practice, she can never hope to rise above mediocrity in her playing. Considering the expense of the instrument, of instructors and music, the weariness the lessons occasion to both player and hearers, and the necessary abridgment of healthful, out-of-door exercise, we must believe that nothing but the evident genius of an

Anna Mehlig for this art would warrant a parent in requiring such sacrifices. A love for it will rarely be awakened by these enforced lessons. There is no prettier sight than a mother playing waltzes for her children who are dancing before her; but, with all this "practising" in girlhood, it is a sight we seldom see. The music has been forgotten almost as soon as learned. Could the hours thus spent have been given to a study of the best authors, or even to a cultivation of the conversational powers, how much more enduring would have been their fruits! But if instrumental music of some kind is to be generally acquired, it would be pleasant to hear now and then the forgotten lute and guitar; or to behold in a modern parlor some white-armed Juno seated at that most picturesque of all instruments, — the harp.

Dancing, as it demands less mental fitness and less time, and tends to a permanent ease of motion and carriage, should be learned by all children, and made a part of home pleasures. It is the most beautiful and civilizing of amusements; and, when we are careful to avoid the senseless displays of maternal folly with which dancing-masters are wont to close their lessons, and the dissipation of midnight revels, no possible objection can be urged against it. The accomplishments that tend to

beneficial exercise in our parlors are too few for us to be willing to condemn this.

Music, dancing and embroidery have always been the principal arts in favor with female amateurs; but their forms have changed with every age. The spinet, the virginal and the harpsichord of our grandmothers gave place to the universal piano; operatic airs have driven out rollicking Scotch and English ballads; waltzes first shocked and then charmed the world; staid old contra-dances had to retire before the lancers and the german; and nice embroideries are supplanted by canvas- and crochet-work in Berlin wools. Through such modifications one art, at least, has rather lost, than won, in opportunities for inventive talent and acquired skill; and embroidery no longer deserves to be ranked among modern accomplishments. Yet no feminine employment has a more ancient and honorable record. It was at their looms, surrounded by their maidens, that Helen and Andromache sat beguiling the time while the battles raged outside the walls of Troy; and Penelope made this task her urgent excuse for turning deaf ears to importunate lovers. Later, in the Middle Ages, fine ladies, still too ignorant to read, wrought marvels of exquisite needle-work in dull, old castles, in the absence of their fighting lords; and nuns in their convents have ever held

the art as one fit for pious devotees. And though Mary, the Scottish queen, had been educated in the literature of two different courts, it was to embroidery that she turned for interest and diversion, in the long imprisonment that exiled her from throne and home and friends.

But this weaving and embroidery of the past were quite different things from those that are practised now. The women of Homeric days not only adorned with their needle the garments worn by their households, but they were forced to weave the cloth with their own hands; and this was what gave the work so important a place. Machinery now produces finer stuffs than any we could fabricate at home with shuttle and thread; and it supplies, also, the greater part of the ornaments to be added, in the form of braids, gimps, cords and ribbons. The sewing of silk into traceries of flowers, leaves, and other designs, is too wearisome for these busy days; and though fashion endeavors now and then to revive it, it is fast becoming an obsolete art, except as a matter of purchased labor. A simple process of braiding is the most we now attempt; and even that is put on by household sewing-machines, over a pattern stamped by an invented process. The delicate arabesques in tambour-cotton on muslin and cambric, over which our mothers spent so many pre-

cious hours of their youth, no longer flourish, when French products of this kind are so beautiful, and those of Hamburg machines so cheap; and the picturing of bouquets in silk floss, once so popular, meets with the same neglect. Indelible ink has made the old-fashioned samplers superfluous, since there is now no need to stitch through the alphabet, preparatory to the marking of clothes. Embroidery, then, properly so called, may be reckoned as a lost accomplishment.

Worsted work has taken its place; but it is an unworthy successor; for while the embroideries of early times required some originality of design and artistic skill, this, whether it be canvas-work or crocheting, aims at nothing better than the servile copying of a purchased pattern. And when manufacturers have gone so far as to supply the market with figures already complete, leaving nothing to be done but the filling in of a uniform background, we may consider it as the amusement of children. Any woman possessing the ordinary modicum of brains should seek a higher employment for elegant leisure; for this not only stupefies thought, but impairs the eyesight and injures health. And to a cultivated taste, the product of such toil can never be half as beautiful as a square of silk damask or brocade.

Thus, one by one, the exquisite but laborious

arts of needle-work once cultivated in our homes are supplanted by the manufacturer's skill; and trade attracts to itself the petty industries that occupied illiterate minds and idle fingers in the households of the past.

V.

GETTING MARRIED.

WHAT is the chief end of man? asks the Westminster Catechism; and, looking only to what it considers a grand purpose in the creation of the race, it makes reply: To glorify God and enjoy Him for ever. Were we to answer the question according to the conduct of the world around us, we should declare, that the chief end of man is to make money, and the chief end of woman is to get married. These are the objects which people in the prime of their days seem striving to attain, and which they must accomplish before they can regard life as a success.

Though these aims of the two sexes appear at first glance so diverse in character, we shall see that they are in reality one and the same. Woman of the present day, no less than man, sets pre-eminent value upon wealth; and she prizes, quite as much as he, the material comforts and the social position which it brings; but it is possible for her to obtain it only by a roundabout course. When he would possess a fortune, he goes to work

to earn it directly, by labor of head or hands; when she desires the same, she can hardly hope, by any efforts she may put forth, to gain competence and honor for old age. The varied markets of the world do not invite her to their traffic; no institutions exist to train her talents to special professions or trades; for what unskilled handiwork she can offer she is scantily paid; and society, clinging to old ideas, would still shame her from all exertion, by telling her that it is contrary to her nature and unbecoming to her sex. It teaches her that she should look always to another for support; that her daily bread, to be eaten with dignity and grace, must be the gift of male relations; from whom she is to borrow, likewise, her chief consideration, and whose reflected glory is the sole distinction she should seek. Her father will, of course, provide for her maintenance in early years; but in due season, if she would not become an unwelcome burden upon his hands, she must be able to obtain another who shall gladly charge himself with the same duty. It is plain to her, then, that when she offers her work to man, he has only a niggardly pittance to dole out as payment for her toil; but that if she becomes his life-long companion, he is ready to share with her his own great earnings, as the free gift of his love.

Hence marriage, which to man is a thing apart from the main business of his days, not turning it from its course, not necessarily affecting it, but appearing to him only as a wider, fuller, social existence in which he may indulge when his means will warrant, becomes to woman the primal object of her endeavor, the all-in-all upon which her whole future depends. To secure a desirable husband is to start in life; as important to a young woman, in its financial aspect, as to a young man is the establishment in a good profession; and, indeed, vastly more so; since no subsequent efforts of her own can materially improve her outward circumstances, and no change is to be made, if the choice shall prove unfortunate. This one irrevocable act determines her lot. Whether she is to be rich or poor, courted or ignored by the world about her, will depend almost entirely upon the income and talents of the companion whom she may select; or rather, we should say, who may select her, — for it is another curious feature of that unwritten law which regulates her conduct, that while success in this matter is made so vital in her career, she is restrained from taking any open and acknowledged means to bring it about. It is the received theory that she stands with folded hands and mute lips, while Destiny is shaking the fatal dice before her eyes. But too much hangs upon the throw for her

to refrain from exerting indirectly all her influence to secure a favorable result.

A young man must labor when he would succeed in the business of his life; a young woman must charm. She must become a siren, and lure lovers and admirers to her side, since she is forbidden to cross the insulating waves to them. This may not be obvious to her in early years; nor can she then explain why her education is made what it is; why she seeks to acquire accomplishments and mannerisms while her brother is mastering problems of science, and devotes herself to dress while he is learning a trade. But these things she comes in time to comprehend; and with clear sense and eager hopes she cannot but reflect much upon what so vitally concerns her future. She realizes that the present is her golden harvest-time, when attractive qualities are most potent, and suitors most easily won. Once let the freshness of her beauty fade, the vivacity of youth depart, and her charms will lessen year by year. When these are gone, her only hope will be, perhaps, to marry some hard-headed, cold-hearted widower, who may be looking for a housekeeper, and who may have no material riches, nor a semblance of affection to gild the lot which she concludes to accept, as more tolerable than poverty and loneliness. It is then a plain bargain, divested of enchantments; he

wishes a reliable woman to direct his house, and a nurse for his neglected children; and this she is at last willing to become, for the board and clothes and home which it will confer, and which she finds it so hard to obtain. There are many middle-aged women who have married in this way; but it is a fate from which she shrinks in her youth. She hopes then for love and tender sympathies, as well as for the opulence and ease which she sees others possess.

Does any one wonder, then, that husband-hunting is the main occupation of our young women? Does any one sneer at them as silly and reckless, because they are ready to stake every thing which they should value for after-life — health, useful acquirements, and culture — in this eager pursuit? or brand them as mercenary, when they turn deaf ears to indigent lovers and smile only upon those who lay full purses at their feet? We make merry over managing mammas, and hold up to ridicule their enticing snares and adroit manœuvres as if these were fair game for virtuous satirists. But why, indeed, should they not manage? As the world rates marriage, and woman's relation to it, it would seem to be their duty. If it is incumbent upon the father to secure a profitable business for his sons, it would appear equally incumbent upon the mother to provide for the future well-being

of her daughters. She cannot esteem it a virtue to remain indifferent to the prospects of those who are dearest to her heart, and who are allowed to do so little for themselves. Some efforts for their good she cannot avoid making; and these will be carefully concealed, or plainly apparent, according to her nature and the social position which she holds.

In fashionable life they will be most conspicuous; for there frequent opportunities offer to advance the worldly interests of her children, and she lacks neither the leisure nor the skill to follow them up. That gay society in which she moves seeks to throw bewildering disguises over all its purposes, and is loath to believe that they are easily penetrated. It flings wide its drawing-room doors to promote what it terms the social intercourse of friends, frequents midnight ball-rooms for the pleasures of the dance, and sets up gorgeous fairs in Charity's sweet name; and these ends are, indeed, answered; but there is a deeper reason for the existence of such gatherings, which the shrewd eyes of the managing mamma are not slow to see. To her they are chiefly valuable as instituted theatres of display for marriageable daughters; since only thus can personal fascinations and engaging manners be displayed in the presence of many attentive admirers. In winter, therefore,

she accompanies her sirens to evening parties, arraying them in the most becoming attire that can be devised, no matter if health and decency be set at naught; and every opportunity is there taken for the exhibition of those accomplishments which have cost so many weary hours to gain, and which are only serviceable to this end. The artist sees to it that the picture he would sell is hung in the best light; and we cannot expect the mother to be less anxious for her treasured darlings. When summer comes, she takes them to the temporary centres of wealth and fashion, to Newport and Saratoga, across the mountains and down to the sea; hawking them about through every wife-market, and exhibiting their fine points, as a jockey would those of a valuable horse. "Sold singly to suit purchasers," and "None but wealthy parties need apply," are written all over their dress and conduct and the management of their friends. This mother is simply practical and self-sacrificing; she is employing the only means allowed her to establish her daughters well in life.

And yet, when we meet her, our woman's soul blushes with shame and humiliation that such things must be. It sounds like treason to our sex even to state in plain prose what is so familiar to observers, and the subject of such flippant com-

ments. We know it to be an enforced degradation, for which the pernicious sentiments of the past are solely to blame, but it is one to which no woman should become insensible.

That the majority of mothers in the society about us appear to retire from such scheming, leaving all to the propitious fates; and that energetic, self-respecting girls more and more decline the debasing occupation, and prefer to betake themselves to direct efforts for an honorable maintenance, is because of that instinct which no custom can eradicate, and which tells them that it is not thus that the holiest of alliances should be sought. Any one, indeed, who reveres marriage as a sacred institution, must look upon all this as a profanation. Its tendency is to degrade the relation into a mere social contract; and to compel women, if not men, to regard it in the light of a business speculation.

All agree in theory that a true marriage, such as Heaven would approve, must be founded in the first place upon a strong and mutual love. Many other considerations should have their weight; but that mysterious attraction between two individual hearts, which no logic can explain, and no reason wholly guide, is doubtless meant by Nature to be the controlling motive in this selection of a partner for life. But in these sordid unions, love,

which should be the guide and leader, is held wholly subordinate to other considerations. Calculating parents in foreign lands bind their sons and daughters to the partners assigned them with no pretence of sentimental ties, and dispose of them by contract as if they were so much merchandise. Our American people are sensible enough to allow their children freedom of choice in such matters; but the young minds among us become so thoroughly imbued with the ambitions of their elders that there is no need to interfere. Here wealth finds its most devoted and reckless worshippers; and as this worship increases, woman's temptation to mercenary marriage must also increase, unless direct avenues to riches be as freely opened to her as to man.

The state of things which gives rise to this degradation of marriage has existed, it is true, for all ages; but for all ages it has been a grievous wrong to woman. To man it has practically said: Provide by labor for your daily wants, and respect your heart; it is not necessary for you to barter that for bread. If a woman marries for a fortune we have no reproach to offer; but if you do the same, we shall hold you in a certain contempt. First secure for yourself an income and a name; then win, if you can, whomsoever in the wide world seems unto you best.

But woman hears a different message; it says to her: Your lot must be to subsist on family charities, furnished by those allied to you either by blood or by marriage. In selecting one to dispense the bounties of later life, you shall choose from the limited number who first choose you, and speak only when spoken to. Falling in love in good earnest is a luxury in which you cannot afford to indulge.

Under this dispensation, when the right person chances to offer himself she thanks her stars, and finds herself truly blest. Thereafter she has no sorrows which he does not share, no need of help which he would not give; and love and exceeding happiness crown her days. But if she wait long, and no welcome claimant appears, she can still live on, as comfortably as may be, upon the means of her friends, or starve decently in staid retirement. So long, however, as the world allows her but one way of gaining the wealth she covets, she will often be tempted to take the holy name of marriage in vain, in order to [illegible]ure it. That union to which she should be d[illegible] by the sweet urgency of the heart, become[illegible]er the means of obtaining a livelihood.

The fact that she still accepts this positio[illegible]out protest, and even with approva[illegible] does not show it to be right; it rather stamp[illegible] the more

plainly as wholly unjust and inexorable to her. For in this, as in many things, she is not only deprived of what are the natural rights of other human beings, but of the very consciousness that she could ever have rights. The world, in taking good care to tell her of her duties to others, has never whispered of the corresponding rights which those duties must imply.

We are led to condemn the usage of society which requires woman to scheme and to manœuvre when she would enter upon marriage, not merely because of its injustice, but because of its pernicious effects upon her character. Nearly all the follies for which our sex suffer ridicule and contempt are traceable more directly to this one cause than to any other. The charge of ignorance, invalidism, and extravagance, so often made against women, and especially against young women of the so-called higher classes, must indeed be admitted to be true. It would be strange if any thing else should result from the existence to which they are doomed in early life. In order to win a husband at all hazards, if only as a means of support, and to win him in the indirect, surreptitious way which society prescribes, these girls must waste the best years of their youth in frivolity, affectations, and display.

Of course they are ignorant, when compared

with intelligent men; for at school the limited education allowed them has to be curtailed of many substantial branches, that room may be made for flimsy, seductive acquirements, whose value shall cease whenever the desired "catch" is made. After entering society, they have neither a taste for serious mental occupation nor any time to indulge it, if they had. The varied facts that fill the daily papers, questions of social morality and order,—all the topics that stir the graver thoughts of men, are to them as if they did not exist. Hay must be made while the sun shines; and the sun will shine for them during only a few short seasons. Minds well trained and stores of general information may be good things enough in their way, but they are not helps to the main object that they keep in view. Indeed, they would be rather hindrances than otherwise, as they believe.

Endowed originally with good intellects and earnest hearts, they become, therefore, vapid in discourse, silly, excitable, and shallow. And this, not from any innate weakness or triviality of character, as men are so ready to infer, but from a true Yankee shrewdness, which brings to the matrimonial market whatever appears most attractive. It is the demand that creates the supply. The girl is as bright and keen-witted as her brother,

and has as clear a vision for the buttered side of her bread. She is fashionable and silly as a matter of business, and giggles and chatters nonsense from policy. To be pretty and stylish proves the surest way to win notice and attentions; and pretty and stylish she must, first of all, become. In her own circle she finds dashing young men of means weakly prejudiced against woman's true dignity, and she ministers to that prejudice; she finds them carnal-minded and coarse, insensible to finer graces, and she exhibits before them her physical attractions, she entangles them in her tresses, she ensnares them with her eyes. In short, she stoops to conquer, and becomes, at length, what she so long affects. Since her sex, throughout life, are made as dependent upon the favor of man for

bread as light as the sea-foam, sweep carpets of every atom of dust, toss eggs and flour into marvellous puddings, and that, in the gay drawing-room, where the conquests she looks for are to be made, all this will go for nothing. Any little chit at the piano, with crimped, fly-away locks, coquettish ways, and some knowledge of sentimental love-songs, will step in before her, and leave her, with all this domestic aptness, to play the wall-flower to the end of her days. It can be no consolation to foresee that ten years hence the entranced hero, who is thus taken captive, will have secret regrets that he had not preferred her enduring charms to those of the helpless little noodle who once sang his rapt senses away. By that time, to be sure, the noodle will have become an inefficient, weak-minded woman, while her husband grows and develops by contact with the world; he will even feel a sense of disgrace when she reveals her ignorance to his friends; and will lament to himself that she has no understanding of his business-interests, and no sympathy with his enlarged ideas: but, for all this, there in his house the noodle will reign, blessed outwardly with wealth and social distinction, and cherished, we will hope, by her husband's tender, all-enduring love; while the poor, unplucked wall-flower is first in nobody's thoughts and plans, and must

dwell a dependent in the houses of others, and a cipher in the society she is suffered to frequent. No, — it is plain to our young lady that life is too precious to be wasted in striving to be useful or intelligent.

The ill health of which we have spoken is also the fruit, in a great measure, of these early years. In order to be present, and to shine, at the evening assemblies where society is to be met, she must ignore every consideration of prudence respecting dress, food, and sleep. And the taste thus created for artificial, in-door excitements lasts into old age, and subjects her constantly to the bad effects of their dissipations.

Woman's extravagance in dress is her only extravagance in money-matters; but it is so great, and so productive of evil to herself and others, that it is properly the subject of general censure. All will admit it to be acquired in the days between school and marriage, when she resorts to rich apparel to heighten those beauties of face and figure upon which her success will so largely depend. The fondness for rare and exquisite fabrics that she then gains is never overcome, but rather grows with what it feeds upon. Women perhaps overrate the influence of fine dress and the latest fashions upon gentlemen; and certain it is that the very expensiveness of such attire frightens the

beholder from all thoughts of matrimony; but these are facts not apparent to their superficial gaze. They see only the immediate effects of their beruffled loveliness upon a circle of flattering admirers; and they fancy that matter-of-fact calculations can never mingle with the sweet homage of those glances. If the dizzy heads around them preserve sufficient balance to reckon coolly and profanely the probable price per suit of so much silk, lace, and workmanship, and the probable number required per year, together with the sundry other personal expenses to which these dainty beings have wonted themselves, it is because the cost of living and the relentless nature of yearly bills have become the foundation upon which the whole social structure rests. They may buzz for an evening around the pretty blaze, warming and glorifying themselves in its light; but they fly off in safety at last, without scorching the tips of their giddy wings. And still the gorgeous apparel is varied and multiplied, till the advent of the princely suitor, whether young or old, who is willing to furnish purple and fine linen without stint.

Such a system of training for our idle young ladies leaves them, after marriage, inferior in mental culture, disingenuous in character, nervous, dyspeptic, and hopelessly broken in health, with a taste for display, a craving for compliments

and adoration, and a love of crowded, characterless assemblies as their only recreation. Wealthy, often, and fashionable, they lead the rest of their kind after them at a slower pace; for nearly all women, even the most sensible, cannot but have a certain servility in their minds, and an undue desire to copy others, when the whole tendency of the instructions received since the world stood has been to repress in them any independence of thought or conduct. They must always be the obsequious devotees of authority, in fashion and in all things, till they are led to reason and to act for themselves.

We do not desire to overstate these evil effects upon woman's character, and we believe, indeed, that they cannot be overstated. While admitting that there is, even in the highest ranks of society, where so much tends to foster such a course, many an Ethel Newcome, who looks with mute scorn upon the manœuvres going on around her, and only submits to them at last because she is helpless to withstand them; and numberless others who devote themselves to vanity and coquetries from sheer idleness, without any well-defined aim, it is nevertheless true that the great majority of unmarried young ladies live the life, and are subject to the influences, we have described. That the sex in general have no condemnation to offer, is be-

cause there has not been time for them to cast aside the old heritage of Eastern ideas. They have been obliged for so long to pander to the prejudices and the passions of others, without questioning the propriety or right, that they have come to believe it their natural vocation. But regarding these practices, to which they are often driven in order to secure a husband and a liberal maintenance, as evils that afflict and disgrace us all, we must denounce them in unmeasured terms. Did we honor woman's real nature less, or harbor any doubts of the strength of her mental and physical powers when properly trained, did we feel less keenly any indignity put upon her sex as a personal reproach, we might submit without protest to the customs that force her thus to belie the nobility of her character and to demean herself before the world.

But it is not women alone who suffer from this condition of affairs; young men, even, do not escape the debasing effects. They can never become insensible to feminine attractions, but they are led to undervalue what was meant for them to esteem. Seeing the follies of which we speak, and not troubling themselves about their cause, they are ready to conclude that women are by nature charming but inferior creatures. In the varied relations of life they treat them, therefore, with

an odd mixture of gallantry and contempt. They are all smiles in their presence, and withdraw to sneer and to condemn. The lofty attitude of superiors they find it very becoming to assume; and they graciously allow their would-be captors to parade before them for their criticism or delectation. If possessed of goodly prospects, they see on every side a score of young ladies desperately eager to secure their attentions, ready to flatter and entice them by a thousand graceful wiles; and they learn to despise what is so easy to obtain.

They learn, also, if inclined to evil ways, that there need be no restraint upon their vices, in order to render themselves attractive to the final object of their choice. Whatever they do, these charmers of the social world will beam upon them still, and gladly accept their hand, when they may be pleased to proffer it. They are in a position to dictate their own terms; and though they can tolerate no hint of evil in a woman, she must tolerate all things in them. Thus we see too many young men of wealth and fashion in our cities leading the life of an abandoned *roué*, sowing wild oats, as they term it, throughout their early years; and then, when they have exhausted all sinful and riotous pleasures, selecting some modest, innocent girl, — who has been blooming, meanwhile, in the seclusion of a guarded home, — and settling down in

life, with the blessing of the minister and the congratulations of delighted friends. Every libertine knows this to be in his power, no matter how low he may sink in tastes and ideas, provided he does not end by drinking immoderately, and has still his family station and resources to offer at the last. Is any other proof needed of the degradation to which woman is forced to descend by these unjust customs, when we see her repressing all her strong, instinctive hatred of vice, striving to love a character that she ought to detest, bargaining purity for foul dishonor, unblemished reputation for a record of shameless sin, and then calling the contract even, in the face of Heaven and the world? Such unions are a desecration of marriage, made in the very name of Him who has given us but one code of morals, for both men and women to obey, and has declared that a virtuous life and fair dealing toward others are needed to win His approving favor.

VI.

THE BETTER WAY.

WE hear fears expressed on every side that marriage is coming to lose much of its sanctity and honor in the eyes of the modern world. Thoughtful men regard our frequent divorces as evidence of this; and they lament every change in the laws by which legislators make them possible. They regret, also, that many young men of moderate means abjure domestic life altogether; while social morality necessarily degenerates, and social sins flaunt themselves in public places. Clergymen and their parishioners, having the welfare of humanity at heart, lift up their hands in holy horror at this weakening of the marriage-tie; but they make no effort to trace it to its cause. They see youth and beauty sold to feeble and repulsive age, for gold and position, without the pretence of affection; and they assist at the solemn farce, pronouncing with unction, "Whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder,"—as if God had any thing to do with such a joining together as that. They see woman forced

to contract a relation so sacred as marriage when she wishes merely for wealth and material comforts, and even driven to it for daily bread; and they wonder that she, and, with her, the world, threatens to regard it too much as a civil contract. They see her forbidden to elect the one her love prefers, and made to accept the best that offers; and they marvel that there can ever be unhappy homes and alienated hearts. They see her, upon starting in life, beguiled into frivolity and display, in order to win this available partner; and they condemn the extravagance of later years, which renders her a monomaniac on the subject of new clothes, and makes of her husband a business-slave. They see her deprived in youth of any stimulus for developing her mind, and any opportunity for strengthening her body; and they are concerned because her children are ill-trained and unhealthy, and herself little better than a chronic invalid.

The existence of such facts may well excite the fears of reflective minds; for whatever tends to deteriorate the marriage relation, and consequently the home, tends to deteriorate the whole machinery of life, whether social or political. But while allowing for much apparent misery in wedded life, such as comes to the surface and demands attention in the many legal trials between man and woman, we believe that a large proportion of mar-

riages, even now, are truly blest and happy. For this we do not thank existing customs, for it results in spite of them; since Fate, contrary to the old adage, is mostly kind to lovers, giving them mutual recognition, and furnishing the income required for their support. And still other unions may be called fortunate, even though entered upon from motives of worldly advancement; for the girl realizes so fully how ruinous it would be for her to indulge in any absorbing affection, except by way of requital and acceptance, that she keeps her heart, for the most part, free, and ready to bestow upon any desirable claimant. From lack of other objects of thought and other interests, she is easily led to conjugal love by any one at all worthy. And even when cruel misfortunes force her to marry for a home, the spirit of self-surrender and dependence, which has become her second nature, leads her to accept the situation and make the best of it. But such unions, however smoothly their currents may glide along, are far from that ideal of blended, harmonious lives which can result only from strong, mutual love and kindred tastes.

And so far as the character and culture of one sex are sacrificed, as they now are, to arbitrary customs, all marriages, even the happiest, must be less noble and perfect than they would otherwise

become. Man suffers as much as woman from any denial of her right to the most useful and happy existence of which she is capable; for if, in the place of an able and enthusiastic co-worker for life, he finds an inefficient, discontented, or resigned companion, his own burden is the harder to bear. She must be able to maintain herself, nay, she must be able to choose for herself, if the two would attain the fullest measure of their being, and marriage become a union of equal, loving souls, not a bond between sovereign and dependent.

Margaret Fuller never said a truer thing of woman than the sentence so often quoted, "In order that she may give her hand with dignity, she must be able to stand alone." When it is possible for her to support herself generously and honorably without marriage, she will seek it only from the higher motive, — that of a true and tender love, such as should unite those whose lives and fortunes are to be one. When no longer a helpless pensioner upon man's bounty, she will cease to marry in pitiful straits for a shelter and a sure supply of food and clothing; and wedlock will appear no other than a sacred and voluntary relation that she assumes toward another. She can endure till the love comes, and will not sell her birthright for a mess of pottage.

We need have no fears that marriages will then

diminish in number; for people will fall in love and will get married as long as the sun and the moon shall endure; and since there will be less risk of beggary, when two are fitted for effective work, instead of one, and less extravagance, when woman's education is made of a nobler kind, some obstacles in the way of a true marriage will be very much lessened. And surely there will be fewer divorces when love cements the bond, and equal culture and similar objects of thought bring husband and wife into closer sympathy.

Such a future is foreshadowed in the marvels of our day, and nothing can stay its coming. When we see girls, for the first time in the history of the world, striving to develop their great and varied talents; seeking to win wealth and independence in many professions and trades; and regarding family resources and social station as no longer an excuse for idleness and vanity in their sex, — we know that the new order of things has begun.

Not only woman, but society itself, will be vastly benefited by this change in her life; for whatever improves her condition must directly improve the whole domestic world, and, in time, the political. All the fervent discussion of the present day concerning woman, so earnestly written and so eagerly read, only proves a universal conviction that there is something wholly wrong about her as she is; and

not only this, but that society is suffering sadly in consequence, and crying aloud for deliverance. It can never be set right till she is released from the tutelage she is so fast outgrowing, and led by man to take her place at his side as an honored companion and equal. The being who now pines and frets within the bars that have become too narrow for her developing powers will then become an efficient, contented coadjutor; happier, because she has full scope for her talents; stronger in body and mind, because her whole nature is brought into exercise; and more earnest, because she sees before her wider interests and greater rewards. Instead of man taking upon himself the whole care of civil life, regulating and supporting it, as he now does, while the other half of the race clings to him as a dependent, cherished and beloved, it may be, but still a dependent, for whom he must labor and decide, the two will work in unison, with powers diverse, but equally well-trained, and productive of equal good. Side by side they will strive to build up a nobler political state, with homes founded upon justice to each other and mutual respect, and made the abodes of health, purity, and intelligence. One sex will scorn to assume general control of the other as a right; but love, united interests, and the exercise of Christian virtues shall harmonize and bless their lives.

In order that woman may become this useful, earnest being, with aims and employments that tend constantly to improve her faculties, rather than to belittle and degrade them, we are led to advocate for her the privilege that man enjoys, of freely declaring the preference of her heart when she would enter upon marriage. It is but the substitution of simple speech for lengthy, labored pantomime; and it must surely follow from any change in her life that devotes the time of her youth to a serious preparation for the duties awaiting her, whether domestic or professional.

We are amused, however, at the indignant protests that woman herself makes to such a straightforward course. She can never be so immodest, we are told; it is foreign to her nature, and she will not thus forfeit her self-respect.

The assertion that her nature forbids it would seem to lack support. Queens are women, with all the instincts of their sex; and yet it is held eminently fitting that they should propose to the one below them in rank whom they may elect to share their throne. Victoria has told the world, without a blush of shame, how she offered herself in all frankness to the German Albert: and when her daughter, the Princess Louise, would wed the son of Macallum More, no one doubts that the first gracious advances came from her. In society

around us, ladies possessed of large estates do not object to have it known that they tendered their wealth, and the burden of its control, to the husband of their choice. It is not woman's nature, then, that forbids it; it is her position. Not because she is a woman, but because she is an inferior, must she be sought and not seek. Place her in circumstances where she is plainly superior to her suitors, and she is expected to make the proffer of heart and hand. Once render her, then, equal with man in resources and public recognition, as we wish her to be, and matrimonial proposals may proceed from either, as occasion shall decide.

Again, as to woman's nature forbidding this offer of herself, we would ask if any one entertains the notion that woman does not offer herself now? Is not her meaning patent to all beholders, when, by dress, assiduous attentions, and winning accomplishments, she strives to attract every eligible bachelor that comes in her way? It is she who does the greater part of the preliminary wooing now; only she does it in public, in a thousand practised arts and wiles; while the courting of man is something sacred and confidential, to be hidden from all eyes but those of the beloved. We regard it as infinitely more modest for her to state her feelings in private, in a few significant

words, to one whom she has learned to love and honor, and from whom she may expect a generous response, than to make the plain and promiscuous offering of herself that she now does in every assembly that she enters.

Immodest, forsooth! The conventional definition of this term strikes us as most peculiar. Young ladies who would feel horrified by the suggestion we make never shrink from presenting themselves in crowded evening parties without the slightest covering for neck, arms, and shoulders; nor from whirling in that indecent costume through the mazes of a round dance, in the arms of a partner of whom, perhaps, they know nothing, except that they were introduced to him five minutes before. And they never suspect, apparently, that it is not perfectly lovely and becoming so to do. One might infer that modesty was a trait peculiar to the masculine character. Our young men who divert themselves by boating, frequent, for the most part, retired waters, where a lady is seldom seen; and yet they are wont to insist, in their regulations, that no oarsman shall appear with waist bared for rowing, lest the eyes of some chance observer may be offended. And when these young men leave their sports after sundown, and betake themselves to the drawing-room soirée, why is it that they never rejoin their

friends there with the broadcloth of coat and vest, and all the lower strata, cut off below their shoulders and above their elbows, so as to exhibit to feminine admirers the stalwart chests and fine muscular arms of which they are justly proud as the results of vigorous and health-giving exercise? If feminine admirers are consistent, they could not object to such attire in the least. But men are too modest to do these things; women are not.

And here, again, it is not woman's nature that is to blame; it is ancient, inexorable customs, that have forced her for so many ages to debase herself, in order to court man's favor, that she has preserved no tradition of what her native qualities would be. It is to substitute a real modesty for this caricature of it that society has set up, and to inculcate a genuine self-respect, that we advocate these changes in her life. When, like man, she shall attend evening parties in the same thick and ample garments that she wears by day, only, perhaps, of finer make; and shall hold it a sin and a shame to fit herself for nothing in early years but to inveigle another into assuming her support, we may listen with attentive ears when she declares that her nature and her modesty forbid her to make any direct matrimonial advances.

There is nothing now, to be sure, that prevents

her from tendering her hand in unmistakable Saxon speech to whomsoever she fancies, except the force of public opinion; but that is the only law of which she takes cognizance. It is all-powerful to determine her conduct. There are indications that this is already undergoing a change in favor of granting her as free a choice in selecting a marriage-partner as man enjoys. Writers are not wanting who openly advocate it as just and becoming. Epes Sargent has made it the burden of a poem; and even Dr. Bushnell, while demonstrating, to his own satisfaction, that woman's claim to a voice in the Government that rules and taxes and hangs her is a reform against nature, admits that this change is most proper and desirable. Masculine readers assent with great good humor to their views, and declare themselves ready for an unlimited number of offers from lady-friends, provided all do not speak at once.

Let them not flatter themselves; lady-friends will then be more discriminating, as choice is more nice than necessity; and this is a question that can never be put lightly by any one; nor put at all, unless there is hope of acceptance. Ladies will expect their full share of such delightful proposals, even then; for it is absurd to regulate from whom they should proceed. It may be that man will

more often be the anxious suitor than woman; we think this very likely; and certainly woman will be far more attractive and desirable as a companion for life than she now is; but it is the consciousness on her part that she can contract marriage, when she wishes, by direct and honorable means that is to work the benefit. She can then afford to spend her early life in strengthening mind and body, as a boy is free to do: for since the sly arts of enticing are to be abandoned, there will be no need for piano-playing where tastes and talents oppose it; no excessive devotion to dress, and consequently no extravagance; no destruction of health by artificial and abominable attire; no affectations of folly, and no respectable idleness. Women will simply go about their business, whatever it may be; welcoming Love, when he comes, as a divine messenger sent to bless and sanctify their lives. But they will still be lives of continued work and progress. Instead of dolls and pets, we shall have queenly, earnest, reliable beings, with souls and bodies of diviner stature; beings whom man can thoroughly honor, and therefore thoroughly love.

Did we believe that this could never happen, we should sigh for the re-establishment of a system of which Herodotus has preserved the record. He tells us that the Babylonians had once a year a

public wife-auction, when all their marriageable girls were disposed of, without any great ado, to the highest bidders. The most attractive beauties were put up first, and they brought, of course, the highest prices. Whatever money was thus obtained they divided at once into dowries for the poor, plain little damsels whom nobody wanted, and whom they managed to dispose of for a consideration to avaricious purchasers. The old historian describes it with charming unction, and remarks that it is the best system he ever heard of. It is surely a much simpler method than we adopt to bring about corresponding results. To say nothing of the vast saving of time to all concerned, it allowed the girls to spend the rest of the year, and all the years before, in plain, serviceable attire, giving them leisure for household labor and out-door exercise, and permitting them to lead something like simple and natural lives. The objections to such a mode of procedure would apply equally well to our present complex system of bartering them away; and there are many excellent features in their plan to which ours can lay no claim. Let us either improve upon the Babylonians or go back to their models.

VII.

WEDDINGS.

THE months of October and November may be set down in our modern calendar of fashion as sacred to Hymen and the silversmiths. It is then that clergymen expect their largest receipts from grateful and expiring bachelors, and manufacturers of costly ware find readiest sale for all the absurd and showy articles which it has entered into their minds to conceive.

There is no event which so stirs a town to its domestic depths as a wedding. The whole social world is in a flutter. Here is one occasion, at least, in which women have the fullest prerogatives, and men have no rights which anybody is bound to respect; consequently things are carried with a high feminine hand. A carnival of fine attire is the result. For weeks beforehand wild rumors are afloat of the extent and magnificence of the bridal trousseau; and each invited friend makes ready her own wedding-garment, not in any egotism of display, but merely to assist in framing the picture. On the eventful morning

the fair throng assemble at the church, in silken robes and waving plumes and snowy gloves; but the men are not. They have been invited, of course; but what is a most exciting occasion to one half the population, is to the other half a stupid bore. Therefore they dodge it; and since the days when scarlet breeches, velvet coats and full ruffs went out they have not been missed. The black broadcloth and close attire of modern masculine guests would be fatal to brilliant effects. But the school-girl, with books under her arm, looks in upon the scene; and she notes all its pretty accompaniments, even to the tints of violet and gold that fall from the chancel-window over the white shimmer of the bridal dress. It is the realization of the last chapter in her last novel. The young lady gazes with a certain envy upon the companion who, for one day at least, is lifted from the dull obscurity of private life, and made the chief personage of the town, and whose lovely appearance is the theme of all tongues. In fancy she foresees just such an event as the crowning point of her existence, and she studies the minutest details before her. Older ladies have a curiosity concerning the looks of the bridegroom, which nothing but their own eyes can satisfy; and they revel in an opportunity to discuss his plans and prospects.

Nor does the flutter and talk end here. Afterward come the comparison of observations, the inquiries concerning the progress of the wedding party, the news of their return, and the receptions at the new home; when all the world again dons its fine clothes, and all the staring and compliments have to be gone over again.

And if we consider how often this has been repeated, and is to be repeated, in all our towns and cities during every season, the fact of its unfailing interest becomes a wonder. One wedding may be the exact counterpart of others, — there may be the usual snowy veil and orange blossoms, the dress-coat and white vest, the piano heaped with silver, the frosted cake, and the congratulations; but the dear five hundred friends never lose their zest. And yet this marriage-festival, which we delight to celebrate, has many curious and inexplicable features. We are not aware, for instance, what law of the Medes and Persians prescribes that a bride's dress shall be unmitigated white. The little god with the flaming torch who is supposed to preside over such occasions has his official robes of saffron, the color of love; by a modern fancy he would surely be dressed in the tints of an iceberg. Though we weary of this blank uniformity in attire, it may be too much to hope that a brunette will ever appear at the altar in

rosy satin under a haze of floating lace, with clustered apple-blossoms in hair and bodice; or a sunny little blonde present herself there in a cloud of blue, with bits of snowy feathers curling over her veil. Yet a demand for more color has evidently suggested the varied hues worn by the bridesmaids; and unless we can regard them as furnishing the relieving tints of the picture, we shall be at a loss to determine what purpose they serve in human economy.

Another query that is likely to arise in a man's mind, after he has tended out at half a dozen of these ceremonies, is why the inevitable wedding-cake is inevitable; and why, being so, it should be the most villainous, indigestible compound of its kind. The damsels who place it under their pillows for dreams may be sure of obtaining them, if they taste of it beforehand. And when he beholds the party set out on the journey, which is the one sensible feature in the present arrangements, he may ask why, if superstitions belong to ignorance, and are to be scouted by intelligent minds, that old shoe should be flung after the carriage, to bring its occupants good luck. Horace says it is delightful to give way to folly on the reception of a friend; and we suppose it must be pardoned at their departure also, if any one chooses to commit it.

As things go nowadays, an invitation to a wed-

ding is no laughing matter. Those pasteboard squares, with their entanglement of monograms, summon us to take part in many absurdities of custom; but, of all these, the most absurd and burdensome is that of giving presents. The fact is, that marrying people practise upon their friends at the present time a system of barefaced extortion, without allowing them the right to resent or expose it. There is no pretence of spontaneity or sentiment in these gifts; they are purchased because they must be; and this the receiver well understands. This exaction upon people of moderate means, rating their affection before the town by the number of dollars they are able or willing to invest on the occasion; and mortifying them, if the gift be small, by parading it, with name attached, in contrast with the outlay of wealthier friends, is so essentially vulgar and indelicate, that it is strange it should be tolerated in any society claiming to be refined. It appears absurd, also, as well as vulgar and oppressive, when one comes to reflect upon it. The matrimonial party really gain nothing; for they are expected to repay the same, in equal value, when the donors invite them to a similar occasion, so that their presents are simply loans. How many times the bride must have said, "Thank you very much; how lovely it is!" over this amount of plate, when she knows

that the equivalent, which must be forthcoming in the future, would purchase a uniform service after her own heart. As it is, each couple find themselves possessed of a heterogeneous collection of silver ware, not only unlike in design, but with excesses and deficiencies which nobody could foresee. We have heard of one bride with self-control enough to smile sweetly on receiving her fourth soup-ladle; and her white lies of gratitude must be pardoned to her for their very heroism.

The matter would be bad enough if it ended here; but after marriage this levying black-mail upon acquaintances is repeated without compunc-

the most from them. It is a terrible ordeal that she must pass through, before she comes into legal possession of the object of her choice. The world demands that she should prepare beforehand an amount of clothing sufficient to last for years; and this must be of elaborate make, all finished and on exhibition before the one particular day. No sooner does a young lady form intentions of marriage than she buries herself from the outer world, with an unlimited quantity of cotton cloth; and, intent on gussets and seams, she has no thought for the duties of her future life. Her happy leisure is gone; small perplexities harass her soul; mental culture is suspended; her health suffers; her beauty fades: but this wardrobe must be planned, purchased, and made under her own eyes, if she dies for it. She emerges on the wedding-day from her chrysalis state, fagged-out and wasted. That she is clothed and in her right mind, at the same time, is a marvel. From that morning the butterfly delivers herself over to the mercy of a staring public; and the scanning of her attire becomes one of the absorbing interests of acquaintances for months.

Then, does any one think of her weariness in standing still two mortal hours after the ceremony, with a curious throng crowding before her, whose hand-shakes she must return, and to whose repeated

congratulations she must furnish fresh replies? A President, on his reception-day, knows something of it; but even he is not the victim of an indiscriminate osculation from one half his visitors. Since all gentlemen, young and old, handsome and repulsive, can exact this of the bride, we see no reason why the ladies who file up should not kiss the bridegroom, and thus compel him to bear his share in the duties of the time.

Through it all, however, he is allowed to escape his proper half of the annoyances. In the ceremonies attending marriage, society seems resolved to regard the little bride as a garlanded lamb led to the sacrifice. Upon her alone devolves the duty of preparing an extensive outfit; her companion is equipped if he presents himself in the one proper suit. Her family makes ready the feast and the display, while his relations look on admiringly. She is given away to him at the altar, but he is not given to her: she wears a ring to seal her vows, not he. The fashionable Episcopal service still compels her — and since it makes no provision for any amendment, must always compel her — to swear that she will obey him, without providing for any conflict of his will with a higher law; and it allows him to utter solemnly what is either unmeaning jargon or perjury, when he declares before Heaven that with all his worldly

goods he her endows; for he knows that he is still at liberty to will away nearly all that he is possessed of; and in spite of his oath the law of the land would allow her no more than the legal third. But these follies do not occur to the bride; the whole tedious exhibition appears to her one of the trials imposed by Fate to torment the souls of happy lovers.

Since the expensive style of modern house-keeping is one of the evils of our time, it would be well to ask whether a habit of foolish display is not begun and established by our present fashion of solemnizing the wedding. It is proper that such an event, marking as it does so great a change in the life, thoughts, and duties of at least one of the parties, should receive especial honor; but cannot something be devised more spontaneous, more heart-felt, and more simple for its celebration? When women are led to concern themselves with the gravest duties of society, let us hope that they will seek for something better than superficial show, and that this solemn occasion will be made the fitting and beautiful beginning of a life of public and private simplicity and worth.

VIII.

THE FEMININE MANIA FOR CLOTHES.

IF there is one subject which is ever uppermost in a woman's mind, which engrosses her thoughts and busies her fingers from childhood to old age, that subject is certainly clothes. Eve inaugurated dress-making in the Garden of Eden; and, from the day of the fig-leaf apron until now, this matter of draping and adorning the human frame has been the chief occupation of her sex. The majority of women seem to consider themselves as sent into the world for the sole purpose of displaying dry goods; and it is only when acting the part of an animated milliner's block that they feel they are performing their appointed mission. When one is to be married, it is clothes alone that are needed for her wedding-day; and she devotes six hurried months to their manufacture. When her child is to be born, the desire of her heart is to provide for it an extensive wardrobe; and no other duty bears comparison to this. When she comes to die, she gives explicit orders regarding the dress in which she is to be laid out; and she secretly hopes this

last costume will prove becoming. After the sad bereavement, her daughters and female friends, in the first outburst of their sorrow, closet themselves with their mantua-maker, and decide, between despairing sobs, what shall be the cut of their new sleeves and the length of their enfolding veils. Grief, with them, has become chiefly a matter of black serges and crape trimmings; and they never allow themselves to dissolve in tears to the extent of forgetting their bonnet-strings. For the space of one year, to a day, they decline all invitations to go abroad, not because they are suffering from recent sorrow, but because they are in mourning; and their regrets are transmitted on note-paper lugubrious with deep edging, or bordered with faint lines, according to the precise time that has elapsed since the mournful event. By such established gradations of alleviated black they shade off the intensity of their woe, until they emerge into resigned cheerfulness and hope through white muslins and alpaca; and they are careful to occupy in the process the exact time that the social calendar prescribes.

Even when no such special occasions disturb the ordinary course of a woman's life, she finds the engrossments of dress sufficient to consume her days. Four times each year she is expected to change her outer apparel to suit the different sea-

sons; and each of these changes for herself and family occupies three months in its preparation. Winter is known to her as the season for furs, and the heats of midsummer are designated as organdie weather. She makes calls to display her new outfit; she is devotionally attentive at church while her fashionable neighbors are donning their fresh attire; she varies the bewailments of Passion Week by daily conferences with her milliner, and drives straight from the prostrations of Good Friday to try on the new bonnet for her Easter display. At home the topic is ever the same; she offers to her baby daughter a doll with fine dresses for her daily care, and teaches her to find delight in the arrangement of its tiny garments; she employs herself so constantly with the ruffling of aprons and the embroidery of frocks for her little son that no hours are left for joining him in his plays or superintending his mental and physical growth.

That clothes, clothes, and nothing but clothes, absorb the thought of the greater portion of the feminine world at the present time must be evident to all. If we pass a group of ladies on the street, in any city or town within knowledge, nine times out of ten we shall catch a remark about their dress, past, present, or prospective; on every fair day they throng the dry-goods stores, and

stand in mute, admiring crowds before windows where the last fashions are gorgeously displayed; and when they return home they are beset by a breathless circle of friends, eager to hear if there is yet any news concerning the coming shape for spring bonnets. No sooner are two ladies introduced, than each sweeps the other from head to foot with a glance as keen and scrutinizing as if she were taking an inventory of her belongings for an auction catalogue; no one turns her back upon smiling friends, but they instantly pause to scan her in silence while she vanishes slowly in perspective; no conversation is so absorbing that the female participants do not improve every diversion between eager rhapsodies or earnest argument to ascertain whether their neighbor's collar is real or imitation, and her bonnet home-made or Parisian. In short, all the interests of their lives, all their trials and perplexities, cluster about the immortal question, What shall I wear? — whose answer must be decided upon at least twice each day.

And the whole world of society manifestly rates woman as having for her legitimate occupation this exhibition of a wardrobe; she is a lay figure for mantua-makers, a peg on which to hang fine workmanship and costly textures. The telegram which reports the President's manner and conver-

sation at his last levee is careful to inform the country that the President's wife was arrayed in such and such a dress, and that her elegant robes were made in Paris. Jenkins delights the readers of daily newspapers with an elaborate description of each lady's toilette at the past fête, and then has nothing further to chronicle concerning her. Gentlemen desire their wives to dress handsomely, that they may assure the world of prosperity in business, thus recognizing their value as barometers to indicate success or failure.

Since clothes play this prominent part in feminine existence, the wearers, if not absolutely engrossed by other cares, must pass their days in devising and fashioning them. When not exhibiting their finished garments they remain at home engaged in the production of new. And yet from the zeal with which the importance of sewing is urged upon our attention one would think that it were in danger of adding itself to the lost arts. The instruction in our public schools is said to be faulty because this is not taught; and in a text-book in common use there is given a long and brilliant letter on female education, such as only Lady Mary Wortley Montagu could write, in which this single sentence is italicized, — "It is scandalous for a woman not to know how to use her needle." So it is; but is woman in need of

this truth more than of all the other ninety and nine sensible remarks with which that letter abounds? In her immoderate use of the needle is she not forgetting that there are any other duties for her to perform? Certain large-hearted reformers, saddened by the discontent and restless striving of their sex under grievous burdens, still maintain that it is sewing-schools that are wanted to render work and wages more abundant. Do they not hear that piteous "Song of the Shirt" echoed feebly from the garrets of starving seamstresses in all our crowded cities? and do they not know that it is because the friendless thousands can always do this work and nothing but this, that they are forced to be content with the merest pittance for their toil? It is idle to call this the present need of women; it is rather their curse, since it prevents them from acquiring higher and more profitable arts. In a certain town a society has been formed for the purpose of sending female missionaries to India to teach the natives how to sew. It would be a more laudable work to frame societies for the suppression of sewing among Christian nations. If it be true that the inhabitants of Ormus and of Ind have existed until now in happy ignorance of the slavery of the needle, why should we carry this affliction to darken all their lives? Why doom our swarthy sisters to

sit hemming ruffles, gathering puffs, and plaiting flounces, under the cocoa's shade, in the heat of tropic noons, with a Godey's fashion-plate spread out before them and a pattern from Mme. Demorest suspended upon the nearest bough? A certain amount of needle-work, sufficient to furnish necessary and comfortable garments for the family, seems to us essential; but better leave even to the rudest savages their thorns, strings, and capacious blankets, than induce them to fashion elaborate garments whose needless seams and stitches shall be as countless as the sands upon the sea-shore, set to the accompaniment of darting pains, failing eyesight, and shortening breath.

It was hoped that the invention of the sewing-machine would relieve women of one half of this labor, but the trimming and work upon wearing apparel have only doubled since its use. We appear to be losing all consciousness of the charm of simplicity and of straight, flowing lines; beauty is made to consist in elaborate and excessive ornament; and one wonders in surveying a modern belle, with her layers of flounces, puffings, sashes, fringes, chains, ear-rings, and gewgaws, how a creature so fearfully and wonderfully made can be put together and taken apart in the space of twenty-four hours.

The evil results upon woman herself of this

devotion to clothes and sewing are twofold. It is one of the many causes that seriously impair her health, keeping her cramped in a wearisome posture over her work, within close rooms, and limiting her walks abroad to anxious quests for trimmings, when she should be sauntering at ease under an open sky. It also precludes her from gaining the same degree of general information that is possessed by the other sex. When men have discharged the regular duties of the day, they are free to employ their leisure hours in reading or social converse. But woman, at such moments, bethinks herself of some netting, embroidery, or crocheting, which claims her time; for even her diversions are merely variations of the same employment. She is no longer given to tearing up cloth into fragments that she may have the pleasure of sewing it together again into quilts; but she indulges in numberless little arts of needlework, which can be traced to no known inventor, and which, therefore, have been called ingenious devices of the Father of Evil for cheating woman of intelligence. She comes to consider time not spent in this way as wantonly wasted. To produce a yard of tatting in an afternoon is praiseworthy industry; to read forty pages in the same time is a criminal indulgence, which should be properly apologized for to herself and others. Any

current literature, to commend itself to her notice, must contain abundant fashion-plates and detailed accounts of the last importations; and though she may possibly look unconcerned at the discussion of national affairs, you shall be surprised at her erudition concerning the laces of Cluny and Honiton, Brussels and Valenciennes; and shall listen in silence while she compares jaconets and organdies, nankeens and Dutch linens. The Azores are the places where fine stockings are knit; India is the source of summer silks and costly shawls. She boasts with pride that her mantle of camels' hair took twelve Hindoo men a year to weave, and that French peasant women nearly ruined their sight in a damp cellar over her gossamer veil. No wonder that such empty, shallow faces drift past us on crowded thoroughfares, set off with all allurements of dress and adornment, but so weak, so blank, so devoid of all intensity of thought, purpose, or emotion, that one almost questions whether there can be dwelling behind them an immortal soul.

The evils caused by this devotion to dress are too manifold to be readily enumerated. The infrequency of marriages, — since the very means thus taken to secure a lover must deter him from becoming a husband; the temptations to dishonesty in our business men, who feel compelled at any price to furnish means for this display; the

entire absorption in money-making, which is ruining the health of our countrymen, withdrawing them more and more from their families and lessening their influence over their children; the going down to dusty death of so many of our sisters, to whom the love of fine attire proves the path that leads to perdition; — all these evils, so threatening in our present society, may be traced in no indirect way to the baneful influence of the reigning extravagance in dress.

This exaggeration of the value of clothes lessens, in the same proportion, the value of woman herself. It degrades the scope and purpose of her life; it leads to ignorance, ill health, extravagance, and social crimes. Whether, therefore, it springs originally from her strong, native love of beauty, perverted and indulged beyond due limits; or from the low estimation in which she has been held, as a plaything and an ornament bound only to please the selfish wishes of man; — it should be the duty of every true woman to control and repress it. The mother should guard her son from the peculiar temptations that will beset him in life by explaining to him their evil tendencies, and by fortifying him with principles that may serve him in time of need as a rock and a defence; let her teach her daughter that this enticement toward excessive and elaborate dress, which will assail her on every

side and which her own nature will so readily follow, is the temptation of her sex, and one that must be wisely and firmly resisted; and let her likewise instruct her in those enduring principles of beauty which should render the simplest garments beautiful and becoming. Then, in that happy future of which we will never despair, when maternal wisdom and forethought shall have cultivated her taste and guarded her with a right moral sense, when a more thorough education shall have filled her mind with earnest thought, and a just compensation for labor have made her time valuable for other and higher work than frivolous pursuits, we believe that woman will cease to throw this blind worship and deification of clothes as a stumbling-block in the path of the world's progress.

IX.

SOCIAL DISCOMFORTS.

LEST any of our readers should suspect that we are about to begin a tirade on that extremely disagreeable and eminently unfashionable topic of woman's rights, we hasten to assure them that no such cruel intention lurks in our heart or pen. Gentlemen have long ago decided what is our proper sphere; and it would be presumptuous in any woman to raise her voice upon a subject so foreign to her comprehension and her interests. Such things as a Magna Charta and Bill of Rights are not to be found in our etiquette-books, and no good can come of meddling with those matters. All this low talk about natural rights, the consent of the governed, and taxation without representation, is only fit for men to rave over and die for in caucuses and on revolutionary battle-fields No lady can have any thing to do with such "glittering generalities," opposed as they are by nature to shirt-buttons and the family mending. So let us gather our silken flounces gracefully about us

and depart to our boudoirs, if haply we may escape the unpleasant jargon. There, indeed, we will take a sheet of French note-paper, gilt-edged, and embossed, if possible, with the coat-of-arms of some republican admiral, that all may be in the nicest good taste; and thereupon proceed to inform the legislators who represent our husbands and brothers and sons, that we decline any disturbance they might meditate in our behalf, for it is as adjuncts and not entities that we wish to exist; and that if they had any twinges of conscience about classing us longer on their statute-books with paupers, idiots, and criminals, we beg to assure them that we are only too happy to be there, since they have chosen it; and that, besides, as we never open those dry, old tomes, we should not have known the fact had it not been told us, and shall never be disturbed by it in the least. And their petitioners will ever pray. Then let us all sign it like good Griseldas, writing out in full our husband's titles in as firm a hand as our shattered nerves will allow. With a few wafts of the fan, and a sniff now and then at the smelling-bottle, we hope to revive and be able to resume our tatting as if nothing had happened.

It is a pity that we should waste time on any thing so unimportant; but since certain ill-bred women, not of our set, have made a strange com-

motion, and induced so many really agreeable and famous gentlemen to join them, we feel obliged to perform this unfeminine duty. Of course there is no great danger for us at present; but then the slaves have just been made into voters, and the women seem doomed to come next. The whole band of learned and book-writing sisters, however, may argue as they will upon public platforms and in Representative Halls; we will cling to our parlor door-knobs, and scream, if we must, that whatever future lawgivers decide, we will not vote, no, not we; that none of those strong-minded viragoes shall drag us out to the polls, for we are resolved to be genteel and lovely and domestic to the last. Let none of us despair; Mrs. Partington failed to keep back the Atlantic Ocean, but the fault may have been in her broom.

By the discomforts of women we do not, then, mean their wrongs, but something far more oppressive; for the word includes all those petty inconveniences to which, as women, we stupidly submit every day of our lives, without a thought that they are arbitrary and absurd. They may benefit no one and trouble many; but inasmuch as society adopts for its motto Pope's questionable words, that "Whatever is, is right," it will be a long time before their removal can be hoped for.

When any usage has continued for ages, human

nature is very apt to look upon it as a blessing. If, for instance, we were to inform a Turkish Sultana that her veil was an extremely inconvenient and nonsensical thing, and that she had as good a right as anybody to walk out alone and look about her to see what she could see, we should expect ten delicate, henna-stained finger-nails to be lifted in holy horror, and two lovely, scandalized eyes to be rolled up in a prayer that we might be pardoned our utter shamelessness. But if she and her companions were suffered to peep out of the corner of their harem windows a year or two ago. on one of the great gala days of their court, they doubtless espied a beautiful lady, sole wife, they may have heard, of a mighty sovereign, driving off in public beside their own liege lord, without so much as a net of gossamer between her face and the upturned gaze of vast, turbaned crowds. To this day, perhaps, they are thinking it over, and wondering how that French empress could have behaved in such a strong-minded, audacious fashion.

If Eugenie had crossed the Atlantic, instead of the Mediterranean, she, in her turn, would have been astonished at our freedom from restraint. The Salic law, to be sure, would have been found in as much force here, in a republic, as in her own land, and far more so than in queen-ruled England;

but the unhampered manners of our women, and especially of our young women, would have struck her with dismay. What! young ladies to walk home from parties with gentleman escorts; to go about by day in the streets unattended, and actually to arrogate to themselves the right of falling in love, and of having something to say about their own marriage engagements, — preposterous! No wonder that European society finds our girls little short of amazons, when they carry such notions into the conventional life of those old cities. We do not propose, however, to put them back into leading-strings, since it is a favorite belief of Americans that an ounce of self-control is worth a pound of external police force; and that to educate young people to a sense of personal dignity and moral responsibility, is better than to provide any number of lynx-eyed duennas and time-serving attendants.

But even here in America we have reached a point at which we feel compelled to stop. A limit must be put at once to this independence or the social heavens will certainly fall. History tells us that the advance of any nation is in direct proportion to the elevation of its women; but this is one of those general principles, those apparently harmless premises, which become so dangerous when carried out to a strictly logical conclusion. Those

who are now looking to the future, and pointing to still higher heights to be attained by their sex, may be safely pronounced as too crazy to be listened to. Ten to one, my dears, they wear green goggles and poke bonnets; are tall and gaunt, and have never had a beau. Such doctrines always have this unpleasant effect upon their advocates. Mem.: Let all young female persons take notice of the fate that awaits them if they espouse these pernicious ideas. Whenever a woman does not devote her whole time to dressing stylishly, it is proof positive that she is not in her right mind; so that we may safely declare that the straiter the jacket with which she is provided, the better will it be for the world at large.

It is only after this long exordium, in which we have endeavored to show that the discomforts of which we speak have no connection with certain mischievous doctrines now prevalent, and to soften, also, the prejudices that exist against innovations upon custom, that we venture to specify more particularly the matters to which we refer. Approaching the subject thus carefully, it is our hope that the foundations of the social sphere may not be set rocking from the shock.

The progress of ideas among Western nations has permitted us to lay aside the veil of our Turkish sisters; but does any one know why it is that

at public entertainments and at church, ladies, though within doors, are expected to keep on their hats, and the gentlemen to remove theirs? It is not an essential to modest bearing, for at an opera it is quite allowable to appear bonnetless, provided one carries upon her head the realization of some tonsorial artist's dream, in the shape of braidings, crimps, and curls. The simple doffing of the hat, even there, for any purpose but that of display is unknown to womankind. We have heard a brave little reformer relate, how in her youth she ventured to lay aside her bonnet at church, because wearing it for a couple of hours gave her severe headache; and how the next morning she was waited upon by a couple of deaconesses, who gravely informed her that such a thing could not be permitted, that it was a scandal to the church, and that St. Paul directly forbade it. If St. Paul had ever tried it himself we may be sure his opinion would have been changed. It is so easy to point out to other dogs the advantages of being muzzled, but when one's own nose is to go into the wire-cage it appears quite a different thing. In our public reading-rooms, where the sons and daughters of our citizens congregate to peruse the current literature of the day, the sons may sit with cool, uncovered heads; but though the daughters should remain for hours,

they must bear aloft their superstructures of velvet and straw, light or heavy, easy or uncomfortable, as the case may be. Nothing but custom enjoins this absurdity, but its rule is so potent that only rare, heroic souls dare oppose it.

Again, at public entertainments we must covet the privilege that gentlemen enjoy of rising between the acts or parts, and going outside the door for a sniff of fresh air and a turn or two in the passage-way for rest. The insinuations that a stronger refreshment is the object sought for in such sallies, may be set down as the malicious whispers of companions who are doomed for the whole time to hard seats and a suffocating atmosphere. One of these days it may be possible for a lone, lorn female to start out for an evening ramble, and even to enter a concert-room on the inspiration of the moment; but her presence there now must depend upon the supply of attendants, and implies that planning and previous arrangement which render sudden action impossible. In our present state, so much machinery must be set in motion in order that fair woman may venture abroad that she longs for such freedom as shall allow her to obey the vagrant impulse of the hour.

Since modesty, like all the minor virtues, is held to be incumbent upon women alone, the other sex enjoy a monopoly of the privilege of staring, the

endurance of which may be set down as a feminine annoyance. Upon coming out of church, gentlemen do not consider their religious exercises closed till they have ranged themselves before the door, and required every worshipper to file before them for their scanning and delectation. Observant groups congregate, likewise, at street corners, levelling bold glances upon each lady that passes, evidently considering it their proper prerogative, and expecting her to drop her eyes like an angel and look her prettiest in return for the insolence. Fancy a row of women stationed along the curbstone before a caucus or the stock-exchange, watching in silence till the crowd of men shall emerge and move along!

At hotels we endure a series of petty discomforts which our masculine friends never encounter. If the latter have reason to mistrust their watches, a glance at the office wall tells them the hour; if they would write a hasty line, pen and ink are ready at their elbow. The hotel-register spreads its pages before their inquisitive eyes, and the news awaits them in a dozen morning papers in an adjoining room which is sacred to their feet. Now we have stopped at sundry hotels in sundry places, and only once have we found a clock in a ladies' parlor or a newspaper accessible to female guests. If they have idle hours upon their hands,

they can spend them in turning over an advertising album, or in gazing at blank walls. For every little trifle that is wanted they must ring for servants and make a commotion throughout the house. The same prices per day will appear upon the bills; and this should secure for them the same privileges that are provided for other travellers.

In thus pointing out some of the small and senseless annoyances to which we now submit as if they were inevitable, we are not regardless of the many privileges that have been granted us in the past few years. A remembrance of the greater restrictions endured in former times, both at home and abroad, should make us sincerely thankful that we were not our grandmothers, and enable us to wait in patience for the larger liberties of the future.

X.

EVENING PARTIES.

ALTHOUGH woman may think herself unjustly excluded from any influence in the domain of politics, she certainly has no reason to complain of the liberty allowed her in the one sphere that has been assigned as her own. If men take upon themselves rather coolly to frame the laws that shall regulate her life and her property, without so much as saying, "By your leave," they, on their part, submit to just as absolute and one-sided a system of legislation when they enter the social world.

Of all those arrangements that are made by friends and families for mutual intercourse and entertainment, woman has the entire control. There she is absolute lawgiver; and she holds, likewise, in her own hands the power of judge and executive. The edicts of her empire are embodied in no written code, and no herald is appointed to proclaim them; but a knowledge and remembrance of their minutest provisions are none the less demanded of her subjects. There

can be no appeal from her decisions, for she recognizes the authority of no courts superior to her own. If her decrees come in conflict with a higher law, so much the worse for the higher law. In short, the unquestioning obedience of an eastern slave, bowing with low salams and shaded eyes, is required of all who would frequent her halls.

If we were to judge of woman's abilities as a ruler by the wisdom she displays in governing this narrow province, we should be driven to a conclusion not greatly to her credit. Indeed, one might infer that she took pleasure in setting at defiance all considerations of health and expediency; and that she framed her social regulations with a view of driving from her drawing-rooms all the more thoughtful and conscientious of the community. She gives parties for the pleasure of her friends; but she insists upon holding them at hours which honest people devote to slumber, requires her guests to appear in uncomfortable and hazardous attire, spreads before them late and indigestible suppers, and demands of all the strictest regard to ceremonial observances. When men and women of prudence and culture send repeated regrets, she laments their absence, but makes no attempt to obviate their objections. If they cannot join in my festivities without destroying health and com-

fort, health and comfort must go, is the decision she makes. With every season her mistakes are repeated; for, like the Bourbons, she learns nothing and she forgets nothing.

In what the charm of her late hours consists no one can well determine. Byron has asserted, without citing his authority, that night was not made for slumber; and he declared, likewise, that night shows stars and women in a better light; but though we may admit the truth of the last assertion, we see no reason why ten o'clock is so much better than seven, nor why, in a ball-room, the attractions of grace and loveliness should increase in direct ratio to the lateness of the hour.

It would be idle to reason that when the great light of the sun is withdrawn from the sky, and beast and bird betake themselves to rest, we have no right by prolonged artificial light to set at naught an evident design of nature, and by unseasonable merriment to rob the sunny hours of the coming day of their usefulness and pleasure. Society has made its laws without reference to reason, and it admits no authority higher than its own. If some princess at a foreign court should, for mere novelty, engrave upon the cards for her next evening fête that she would receive her friends from seven till nine, she would do more for the regeneration of our fashionable world than

the most convincing arguments could effect in a century. When silly sheep insist on following a leader through any gap in the wall, it is of no use to point out to them an open gate near by.

It must be admitted, however, that many women have in their natures something akin to owls and fire-flies. While men grow stupid and sleepy toward evening, they become brighter and more open-eyed, and show a propensity to flit and sparkle under the light of chandeliers. Men nod through lectures and prayer-meetings by the scores, but who ever saw a woman asleep on such an occasion? She may be of the weaker sex, but she can out-dance the stoutest partner in any ball-room revel, keeping up the giddy whirl till the small hours with unfailing spirit. We are told that at the ancient festivals of heathen gods, women held their wild orgies at midnight; and they still delight in the same practice.

Then men have such a horror of the conventional attire that is demanded at these late parties — the fine suit, the white cravat, the kid gloves — that this regulation, of itself, would be sufficient to deter most of them from attending. After a day of exhausting labor, a merchant or lawyer feels little inclination for the task of converting himself into a Beau Brummel. That ladies are obliged to present themselves in most elaborate

array, and in the nights of mid-winter to don laces and tarletans in place of their usual warm wrappings, may keep the older and more prudent at home; but the young and pretty see in such routs their golden opportunities. They know that they look especially lovely when apparently emerging from vaporous masses of tulle and garlands of roses; and since to be thought beautiful and to be admired not only ministers to their vanity, but contributes to their establishment in life, they can afford to despise no means that shall conduce to this end.

And it is they, their escorts and admirers, who fill the rooms with restless crowds that overflow into the halls and congregate on the stair-cases. In the heated atmosphere, where breathing and locomotion are well nigh impossible, an unoffending individual is expected to stand for several mortal hours, talking small talk vivaciously to every one who drifts near him, concealing all yawns and bored expressions by a perennial smile; while the chatter of a hundred tongues, the rustle of silks, the swinging of doors, the confused notes of a distant song, the glare of the gaslight, the crowding and crushing, the half-understood replies, lead him to fancy himself stranded in the midst of some good-natured pandemonium, where each one is in torment, but resolved to make the

best of it. What wonder that, after having endured in youth his proper share of such voluntary martyrdom, he prefers for ever after his quiet arm-chair at home, with a newspaper or friend to afford him rational and instructive entertainment?

But the greatest objection to these entertainments is that there is nothing in them distinctively American; that they reflect in no manner the ideas of Republican institutions, but are servile copies of similar assemblies in decayed monarchies. The whole spirit with which they are imbued is, indeed, directly opposed to that sentiment of equality, that preference for simplicity, that strict regard for right, which gave rise to our political existence, and which ought, likewise, to be reflected in our society.

Man, in America, becomes by habit and education democratic, and not only so in principle but in feeling; but woman, trained in its social world, is still aristocratic. Democracy and the republic are a mere sound to her: she believes, however vaguely, in the doctrine of caste, and would do her utmost to establish it in her midst. If our government were delivered wholly into the hands of women of fashion and society, we should have a monarchy and an hereditary order of nobility established within a twelvemonth. The early mothers of the commonwealth, educated by the

Revolutionary struggle, could not but sympathize with the ideas on which the new government was built; but Martha Washington and Abigail Adams have had few successors worthy to preside over their simple courts. It is pomp and ostentation, rather than simplicity, that is sought; and the plain, homespun suit in which Benjamin Franklin represented his country at Versailles would seem as much out of place in the modern parlors of our own Capital as they did in the gay drawing-rooms of a French monarch. We still insist that our ministers to European courts shall wear, among foreign velvets, periwigs and knee-buckles, the plain attire of a civilian; but their own wives and countrywomen appear there arrayed in all the splendors of duchesses and queens, and have become notorious throughout the Continent for their elegance and extravagance in dress.

Our ruler of fashion at home, to whom we have intrusted the whole machinery of social life, cherishes in every way the ideas of effete and favored classes of the Old World. She has a true royalist's regard for the authority of precedent. What *they* wear and what *they* say determines her conduct and opinions; though who is meant by this despotic *they*, whose fiat is so powerful, one is too considerate to inquire. She delights to be where somebody else cannot come; and the words "se-

lect," "exclusive," and "our set" have an especial charm for her ears. In her realm, merit always wears the thickest satin and the finest broadcloth; and, far from upholding the notion that all men are born free and equal, she sees only in wealth and birth a clear title to honor. Her Chinese cousins submit to having their feet bound and cramped from infancy, to prove that they do not labor, and her sisters at the South boast of their helplessness, and proclaim work to be fit for slaves; but though she does nothing of this, she retains the same spirit, tempered by Northern energy and education. Her husband owns as friends worthy men among laborers and mechanics, but they find no admission through her doors. He would never dream of assuming an air of superiority to his tailor or hatter, beyond their own stores; but in her domain the woman who trims her bonnet or makes her dresses can never attain to any equality with her. It is praiseworthy, she admits, for her sex to work, if they do it from choice; but when they take it up from necessity, straightway there yawns between her and them a gulf too deep to be crossed, too wide to allow her even to recognize their faces. Such are the rulers—narrow in ideas, slavishly obedient to foreign fashion, and ignorant of all principles of progress—who give laws to our feminine world; and the

women whom they represent, their social constituents, who in virtue and intelligence excel the women of any other land, receive without protest all their foolish decrees.

If a genial and general intercourse among friends be not considered important, let us abandon these customs that are worse than absurd; but if it be thought essential to the well-being and happiness of society that its members should meet for the interchange of thought and the encouragement of kindly feeling, let those who are fitted by education and position to control its action, do their utmost to repeal the pernicious regulations of the past, and strive, by influence and example, to establish our assemblies upon some footing consistent with health, simplicity and democratic ideas.

XI.

BEAUTY AS A POWER.

"IT is the first duty of every woman to be beautiful, and if she is not she might as well go and hang herself," was a remark we once heard from a facetious friend, who thus expressed in plain terms what has ever been the accepted creed. In life women are supposed to play the same part that flowers do in the natural world; they have always been told that their proper object is to embellish and to please. The common use of the epithet fair, to designate the female sex, proves this to be the distinguishing trait. Is she pretty? is the first question asked concerning any one of Eve's daughters; Is he smart? is the query concerning a man. In short, woman is chiefly valued as a physical being; and upon personal charms her influence is made to depend. It is the Helens of history who stir up long wars and make enemies of nations; it is the Recamiers of our modern world who gather to themselves the flattering homage of genius, wealth, and power. No other qualities, however brilliant, have ever atoned for

the lack of this potent dower of beauty. Madame De Staël, at the height of her illustrious fame, would gladly have surrendered all her gifts to have called this one her own.

Man is not wholly independent of such graces of person in himself, but they are by no means vital to his success. If he has ability and ambition, not even positive deformity can seriously hinder his advance; for the favor of woman, in whose sight alone his personal traits would be important, has very little influence upon his business or professional career. With her the case is different. Her rise and recognition in the social world, where all her triumphs must be sought, depend so entirely upon the preferences of the other sex, that it is only by becoming beautiful in their eyes that she can hope to reign and to shine throughout life. If she has been born hopelessly plain and unattractive, she comes early to understand that the honors and attentions she longs for can never be hers.

All this arises from the fact that to man alone has hitherto been given the shaping of society and the moulding of thought. If woman from the start had had the control of governments, the making of history, and the writing of literature, we should have had just the opposite result. It is natural that a handsome man should please her

more than a pretty woman; and if hers had been the power to enforce her tastes, we should find the beauty of men regarded as their distinguishing glory. She would have given it influence in her affairs and celebrated it in her poems; while her own sex would have been valued chiefly for mental and moral qualities which might render them useful in the places they should fill. The writings of our male poets abound in portraits of fair women, in stanzas to Blanche and Claribel, to Laura and Beatrice, extolling their silken tresses, their graceful forms and pencilled brows. Why is it that we do not find in the works of our poetesses similar verses in praise of James and Maurice, odes to Henry and Hiram, and touching sonnets on Michael's moustache and William's flowing beard? Simply because men, having the power, have made it the fashion, in literature and everywhere else, to extol the beauty of women alone; and their sister bards, coming later into the kingdom, have copied the models that they found before them.

But the standard of female beauty which has been thus accepted, and to which all must strive to conform, is a false and unnatural one; so that serious evils are the result of its adoption. If a healthy, hearty, generously developed being, of steady nerves and bounding spirits, were the received ideal, the tyranny which should compel the

sex to attain it, if possible, would lead directly to their own physical improvement and to that of the race. But it is made to consist in qualities the very opposite of this. The familiar heroines of our books, particularly if described by masculine pens, are *petite* and fragile, with lily fingers and taper waists; and they are supposed to subsist on air and moonlight, and never to commit the unpardonable sin of eating in the presence of man. Longfellow, Tennyson, and the whole tuneful throng, immortalize the maidens of their verse as slender and wand-like, with a step so light that the flowers scarcely nod beneath it. Evidently, fine constitutions, strength of muscle, and hearty appetites, are becoming only in washerwomen and amazons. A sweet-tempered dyspeptic, a little too spiritual for this world and a little too material for the next, and who, therefore, seems always hovering between the two, is the accepted type of female loveliness. No wonder, then, that boarding schools hold the tradition that it is interesting to be pale and languishing and consumptive; that the Venus of Milo spoiled her form by not wearing stays in her youth, and that Hebe's complexion would have been greatly improved by a judicious course of slate pencils and pickles.

It is true that men of sense at the present day disclaim any such opinions, and call women deluded

when they fancy that wasp-like forms are admired; but these are the ideas that their own authors have expressed in the novels and poems from which our girls derive the greater part of their information concerning the opinions of the world at large. And this absurd ideal is still reflected in the conversation of young men, whose favor must chiefly be sought.

Either sex will, naturally, admire most the very qualities it does not possess; and this unreasoning masculine preference for what is delicate and ethereal has led to our present perverted taste, and is to blame for the wilful disregard of health which it has induced. Men complain that women's favorite heroes, as they describe them in their books, are merely coarse and strong and brutal, with no more culture and refinement than are to be found in grooms and hostlers. Because this is so, their critics do not, however, endeavor to become such; they dismiss the portraiture with the sneer it deserves, as merely an exaggeration of what woman herself has not. But their own equally false conception of beauty is set up without protest as a standard to be attained, because women have no choice but to please and humor them.

The physical discomforts that women have submitted to, and still submit to, in order to make

themselves acceptable according to these perverted notions, are such as men can never know nor imagine. Since small waists are desirable, they compress their lungs under corsets and tight dresses, so that with every breath they are conscious of ligatures and restraint. The couplet that "March winds and April sun make linens white, but maidens brown," is stamped upon girlish minds at the same time with the ten commandments, and much more impressively; and since "it is not pretty in gells to be brown," as Maggie Tulliver found to her sorrow, they wrap themselves up in thick veils during the spring months, and only behold the outer world through a dense medium of green barege. What would induce any man to envelop his face and head in one of these coverings week after week, whenever he went out of the house, even though he knew that without it tan and freckles must be his appointed lot? On what consideration would he submit for an hour to the masks of spotted lace by which our beauties enhance the effect of eyes and brow, even if his sight were not to be impaired by the flicker of their black embroideries? Their wearers enjoy them no more than he would; but he has made fairness of complexion so precious to a girl starting in life that she must possess it at any hazard. Long tresses being also declared a glory to woman, she heaps upon her

head such a mass of heavy, cumbersome braids, and skewers them on with such a weight of metal hair-pins, that, enslaved by this fashion, she can dream of Heaven only as a place where it will be permitted her to wear short hair.

Reflecting upon these and all other absurdities into which our sex are led by the false standard of beauty that prevails, we can only paraphrase the apostrophe of Madame Roland, and exclaim: O Beauty, Beauty, how many crimes are committed in thy name!

The increasing sentiment in favor of allowing woman greater liberty of action and better opportunities for self-advancement, tends to lessen her dependence upon the favor of men, and therefore promises to open a new era to plain womankind. Heretofore they have been only the beggars at life's feast. Beauties have held the world at their feet, ruling solely by the divine right of loveliness; they have sipped the sparkling wine, while their ugly sisters have had bitter dregs for their portion. But at length, after six thousand years, both are growing heartily tired of playing the role of a merely physical being, valued only for the external charms which Nature confers. The beauties are sick of their nauseous flatteries; the plain sisters are tired of their dark corners and dry crusts. They propose that hereafter it shall be propitious

for a girl to be born under other planets than that of Venus; and that she shall find a more direct and honest way to influence and wealth than through rouges and cosmetics, tight lacing and mercenary smiles. Then, when the unattractive maiden shall cease to weep bitter tears over a hopeless lot, and shall dare to preserve her health and comfort despite false sentiments that may be cherished, man will lose, perhaps, a subservient flatterer, but he will gain a more efficient friend; and the world will behold a nobler, grander type of woman than our present tyrannical customs have allowed us to see.

But because this new era of enlarged opportunity for women is to crown other heads than those made beautiful by birth, it need not be feared that we shall be delivered over to a reign of ugliness and deformity. Nature will probably send us just as many bewildering eyes and ruby lips, just as many shapely forms and golden locks; and when those who are not blessed with these gifts allow themselves to become stronger and happier, by discarding our present mischievous models, they cannot but grow prettier and more agreeable. Because they are to become intelligent, active, and ambitious, it does not follow that they will delight in making guys of themselves. Men possess these qualities, and yet maintain sufficient regard for a

decent exterior. Women are naturally more sensitive to appearances; and they must always desire to become pleasant objects to the sight, not, perhaps, after any prevailing fashion, but according to the eternal principles of taste. Lovely women, whatever may be said, never find truer admiration or more reverent homage than that rendered them by their own sex; and this innate love of beauty for its own sake will always keep them the guardians of the proprieties of life. We may well suspect the thoroughness of culture and the balance of mind of any one who deems that she is allowed, by talents and acquirements, to make herself repulsive in dress or in manners. Our Creator has thought it best to adorn the earth with roses and lilies and delicate vines; and it is certainly the duty of His children to make themselves as fair as possible, that the unsightly objects of the world need not be unnecessarily increased.

But the highest ideal of beauty will demand something more than the mere external and superficial. In youth, we think chiefly of the complexion, the color of the hair and eyes; afterward, we appreciate the perfections of shape and contour, the regularity of features and the symmetry of form; then, the fascinations of carriage and manners, and tones of the voice; finally, the impress of a sweet or noble character gives its last and

crowning finish to what Nature had made so fair. Such beauty, full and harmonious, is but the expression of a comely, well-trained body, cultivated mind, and loving heart. It is never to be sought for in itself; where favor has not been denied at birth, it results incidentally from the fulfilment of the various duties of life. Practising the virtues that health, temperance, and cleanliness require, insures a fine physique; the training of the intellect and the culture of Christian graces irradiate the face with that light which comes only from the inner loveliness of mind and soul. Such beauty will only increase as years roll by, rendering its possessor more attractive in mob-caps and gray curls than she has ever been in the first flush of her youth.

XII.

CHARITABLE FAIRS.

THE great fairs held by women in all our cities during the past few years have become such a recognized and important feature of our social life, that any picture of woman's work, to be complete, must give them special mention. They are the means which she has chosen for providing herself with those supplies of money without which her beloved charities would soon come to an end.

Fairs, then, may be described as the feminine mode of paying corporate debts. When men associated together in any enterprise are unable to meet their liabilities, they have nothing to do but to close up business for lack of funds, declare a failure, and abandon every thing to creditors; when women find their projects drifting into the same strait, they inaugurate a fair. It is their last resort for getting out of a financial fix; and they carry the matter through with the energy and desperate resolve of those who have found their last ditch and yet meditate no surrender. Whether they have a hospital to provide for, an industrial

school to establish, or a society to support for sending parasols to the Hindoos, the motto wrought into their empty purses is, "Never say die."

After maintaining a vast army for three years in the field, the nation may think itself nearly bankrupt, and may see no way for supplying its sick and wounded with comforts; but women, declaring that it ought to be done, pitch gay booths in the heart of every metropolis, and draw in over their confused counters not thousands of dollars, nor hundreds of thousands, but millions, from that same depleted, bankrupt nation. And in dull times of peace, when trade is stagnant, and the pew-holders of a church vote, in solemn council, that their place of worship must wait for its new furnishings till more prosperous days, the women shake their heads with a knowing air, whisper together, and straightway announce that, in spite of the vote, fresh paint is to adorn the pillared arches, new carpets make the aisles luxurious to the feet of dainty worshippers, and unworn velvet replace the battered cushions of the desk. Or, if it be a wheezy old organ that jars on their sensitive nerves, they decree that a new instrument shall lift sonorous pipes behind the tuneful choir, and roll a tide of thunderous harmony along the trembling roof. The men assent, but consider it their duty to look grave, and to throw out

vague forebodings as to the results, until the closing day of a successful fair brings in the last hundreds that were promised, and leaves a surplus on hand for the Sunday-school library. Then the victors claim their right to look triumphant and self-satisfied; for though, in the end, it all came out of masculine pockets, the owners of the pockets declared that it could not be obtained, and these adroit managers have proved that it could.

Of course women know of but one way to get money, and that is by wheedling. Their own individual supplies are procured in this manner; and it is not strange that they make it the basis of that extemporized shop-keeping which they call a fair. A sale of fancy articles is the ostensible means by which their funds are to be replenished; but all their trifles of needlework, art, and *vertu* are only graceful pretexts to render the work of coaxing and compelling more agreeable.

The wares that are provided for a speedy home consumption are by no means such as the world seems to be in need of. The elaborate nothings, the gewgaws, the delicate fancy-work, fabricated for the cause by dainty fingers, seem devised for imaginary wants; and considering the durability of pin-cushions, tidies, and toilet-mats, and the vast quantities which are distributed at every such sale, one may well wonder where a fresh supply is

to find its demand. But it is really of little consequence whether these things are wanted or not; the crowds are bound to purchase whatever the vender has to offer. Articles are not made to suit customers, but customers are procured to suit articles.

The fair captors are sure of their victims when once they get them within their influence. A man may resist a highway robber who puts a pistol to his head with a rough demand to stand and deliver; but when the little land-pirate has a haze of golden hair, and eyes of heaven's own blue, when she smiles entrancingly, and holds out a bon-bon while demanding imperatively your money or your life, there is nothing left but to obey in gallant style. You have walked into her parlor, like a foolish fly, only that she might spin her web around you and draw out the life-blood of your pockets, under the gleam of the gaslights, where she has swung her silvery nets. After a few sad experiences at the pretty booths that line the vast hall, you think to escape all harm by steering clear, on every side, of that dangerous coast, where, under arches of bunting and evergreen, sit the row of sirens who would fain lure you to destruction. But, cruising gaily about, you come upon runners and agents of the great sales that are in progress, whose business it is to go up and down seeking

whom they may devour; and these button-hole, cajole, and flatter you, beg enthusiastically and implore delightfully, till you surrender to them the last ragged greenback left crumpled in the corner of your porte-monnaie. Then, as you reflect that from nothing, nothing can come, for the first time a sense of sweet security possesses you. Until this happy point is reached, you feel that, to all the eyes around, you present the appearance of a walking pocket-book; and the attractiveness of such a character renders every step a peril.

The sale of articles is only one method by which money is to be coined in this greedy mart; all arts, callings, and professions are to contribute their means of profit. When you have bought all the goods you can carry, you may be led to appease your hunger at an improvised restaurant, where sloppy oysters, cold tea, and curdled milk are served to you by white-fingered waiting-maids, at romantic prices. Then you are tempted into divers entertainments, — to gaze upon lovely tableaux, to listen to a miniature drama, or to assist at a petty concert. Or you start in a railroad for the moon, try your luck in a dry fish-pond, drop a bucket into Rebecca's well, call for a letter said to await you at the post-office, and allow yourself to be sold, before admiring friends, in some gallery of art.

When the feminine brain has been racked so thoroughly to invent and carry out these devices, the masculine pocket is in honor bound to patronize them. The managers of the enterprise declare that they mean to fleece you, by their array of means and appliances, and you signify your willingness to be fleeced when you enter. You have put your foot into a money-trap, and, of course, must expect it to spring. Why you came there you scarcely know, except it be from that delight in skimming upon the edge of danger, which leads the moth to wheel nearer and nearer the candle's flame, till he drops writhing beneath. Perhaps you fancied when you entered that you were a free agent; but you see now why the Parcæ are represented as women. It is a reign of terror which surrounds you; where you cannot find it in your heart to cry out upon your oppressors, even when buttoning up your pocket and sidling off within hearing of a policeman.

But here policemen would be as powerless to maintain a decent respect for law as they are within the palings of Harvard College. Such scenes of transient traffic claim the privilege of setting all common laws at defiance. The morality displayed in our great charitable fairs would disgrace the dealings of any set of unprincipled sharpers or cunning vagabonds in the world. The

women who conduct them are themselves strictly upright and honest; but, in their utter ignorance of the laws of trade, they ignore the existence of such a thing as business honor; and they proceed to conduct a monster market, without any experience in the disposing of their wares, or any idea that right and justice should be considered in their bargains. They mix charity and traffic, giving and buying, so closely together, that a customer is not sure whether he is to consider himself as egregiously swindled, or as made benevolent against his will. Provided the object be good and praiseworthy, these zealous shopkeepers have no compunctions as to measures adopted. Whether they beg, borrow, or steal, it makes little difference, since the resulting funds are devoted to the church, the hospital and the school. The doctrine of the Jesuits, that the end justifies the means, has ever been condemned as dangerous and wicked by other sects; but it is precisely the one which the managers of these fairs act upon, and which they have not the shame to conceal. The Spanish Inquisition was a horrible thing, they will admit, without suspecting that the logic which upheld that, is the very same they employ to justify their deeds in Charity's behalf.

It is a disgrace to our churches, that, while civil governments prohibit all games of chance, as both

intrinsically immoral and subversive of honest industry, and no citizens dare engage in them for fear of the State Police, the members of our religious societies commit those bodies to a defiance of the law and an open support of lotteries and gambling, under the hypocritical designations of raffling and voting. To ask exorbitant prices for articles, and return no change to the purchaser; to inaugurate all possible games of chance, and induce law-abiding people to take part; to condemn plays and operas for theatres, and then introduce them upon their own boards; — in short, to win money by any device, provided it be done by respectable people and for a good cause, is the ungracious look which these well-meant efforts wear to lookers-on. But we must sell our large articles, they will tell us, and there is no way but by raffling. Very well; we should like our neighbor's silver plate: suppose we steal it, and defend ourselves by declaring that in no other manner could it be obtained. Charities that are upheld by illegal and immoral practices have a questionable foundation. It is true that the old adage, "Be just before you are generous," is a very inconvenient one to follow sometimes; but we doubt the propriety of varying its injunctions, and reading it: Be charitable before you are honest.

The blame of conducting fairs in this way is

due, we must admit, to the women. Gentlemen who assist them do so gallantly and blindly, abandoning all right to private judgment when they enter their service. That their fair captains never suspect themselves of wrong-doing is because they know their aim to be entirely unselfish, and plainly for the benefit of a noble cause. If a new organ is to add its mighty volume of sound to the tune of hymn and psalm, it cannot matter how they raise the wind; if new breadths of Kidderminster are to stretch adown the chapel aisles, no one need ask by what device they brought down the dust.

It is true that men reared in the same way as women, with no knowledge of the obligations of trade, or of their own moral duties as citizens, would act in the same manner, provided they possessed the same active benevolence; but, for all that, the evil is one which honest minds must condemn, and hope to see abandoned by those whose duty should be rather to cultivate a respect for civil laws and common rectitude.

The one principle of political economy which women thoroughly understand is the unpopularity of direct taxation, and the expediency of obtaining by circuitous means what cannot be enforced as an obligation. Yet one cannot contemplate the vast machinery of our modern fairs without regret that

such an expenditure of time and strength should be necessary to induce people to be charitable to the poor and obliging to their friends. When the community see that a company of ladies are resolved to abstract a given sum of money from their purses, by fair means or foul, and when they know by experience that they will do it, why cannot they save their wives and sisters all this preparatory labor and anxiety, this wheedling and manœuvring, this immodest, persistent begging, this neglect of daily duties, this inheritance of coughs and colds, by deliberately walking up to the treasurer at the outset and paying over their proper, individual assessment? Why not imitate the example of Captain Scott's philosophic coon, which dropped from the tree, exclaiming, "Don't fire! I will come down."

XIII.

SUMMER RESORTS.

FASHION — the berated tyrant, who leads our fine ladies, for the most part, such a terrible life — has certainly been indulging of late years in one sensible whim. She says to her jaded votaries when the bright June days come round, "Let us put an end to this for a while. Turn the key on your gay drawing-rooms, and fly with me from dusty streets into Nature's halls. We will have revelries, perhaps; but they shall be with the soft heavens above us, and leagues of green meadows, or the blue sea, at our feet."

And so they flit to other scenes; and a glorious time they have of it there, if we are to believe their reports. When listening to the greetings of friends at early autumn, after their return to city homes, one is struck with the universal tone of satisfaction in which they refer to their summer wanderings. No one confesses to a disappointment. That class of people who, whatever they do, always regret that they had not done something

different, seem, for once, to have made just the right choice. Travellers from the forest region confess, when closely questioned, to a long battle with black flies, and admit they kept the enemy at bay by masking their faces with a coating of tar, but this appears in no way to have lessened their enjoyment; dwellers by the ocean have sat wrapped in shawls all the chilly summer, but they come back enthusiastic over the seaside; sojourners from inland farm-houses long for good food and comfortable beds once more, but in the same breath lament that the beginning of the children's schools would not permit them to remain and watch the autumn foliage grow crimson under October skies.

And in all this there is perfect sincerity. The inhabitants of our cities are becoming a migratory race in summer, not merely because it is fashionable to betake themselves to the country at this season, but because they find in it solid delight. Nature has not lost for them her sweet attraction; nor have the increasing luxuries of their homes rendered them insensible to the charms of a free and simple life. In out-of-door rambles they have found a pleasure, compared with which parlor-sports and winter-routs are insipid. This is a hopeful sign, whatever *paterfamilias*, contemplating his shrunken pockets, may think.

But we must except from our crowd of contented

faces the greater number of those who return from gay pleasuring at the centres of fashion. The frequenters of such resorts, as we have noticed, are mostly young ladies, with their elderly companions; and whether we see them there in the whirl of their wildest dissipation, or after they have resumed their life at home, they appear to be ill at ease. They have the air of looking for something they never find. When we discover another fact, that at such places there is always a scarcity of gentlemen, we suspect the cause of the discontent. The giddy belles have come for attentions, and have found them not. What becomes of the young men in summer, must be as puzzling a question to them, as what becomes of the flies in

sweetness of their fresh apparel on the desert air, passes their comprehension. They believe fully in the all-engrossing interest of clothes; and they suppose that every one else does, as a matter of course. But the young men, giving no note of warning, set out each year, with knapsack and alpenstock, toward the Maine woods, the Rocky Mountains, or the shores of the Great Lakes; and each year the pretty maidens all forlorn spread their four toilettes a day on beau-forsaken piazzas at Long Branch, or drive their high-stepping spans along the roads at Newport, with no gallant to gallop beside their carriage-doors; and then, after it all, they come home with rumpled finery and a dreadful disfigurement of tan, as the sole trophies of their summer campaign. Of course they are disappointed; who would not be, when he had put out his best card and lost? Not only have they won no admirer; they have gained neither health, rest, nor a feast of Nature's joys.

Probably no hotter, more uncomfortable abiding-place is to be found on any flat sand-plain of the round globe than Saratoga; and yet all fashionable womankind are pleased to close their luxurious palaces overlooking the breezy spaces of our city parks and gardens, that they may hasten thither and suffocate for weeks in narrow attic chambers. Do they have any regrets for the lovely sights

they are leaving, when they take a parting glance from their windows? Cool breezes are stealing up the broad streets from the waves of a brimming bay behind; before them, the lawns are green and freshly shaven, the clumps of shrubbery fragrant with bloom; gay verbenas cluster in the parterres; jets of sparkling diamonds leap and fall into troubled basins; fairy boats sail a placid lake; stately swans glide under a buttressed bridge; and high above them, on his granite pedestal, the beloved warrior rides gaily toward the sunset. A circle of wind-blown tree-tops skirts the lovely scene, and in the distance an amber-hued dome rises serenely against the azure sky. Or, if it be evening, distant music steals up to the window and floats fitfully by; and along the moonlit walks young lovers saunter, trailing black shadows on the bright, hard pavement. Is it Marius and Cosette, met in the Luxembourg gardens? But this is to be seen from a city street, and no one would think of looking there for beauty and romance in midsummer; and so the curtains go down, the cool, palatial rooms are given over to flitting moths, and the bright eyes depart, not to dim forest glades, but to heat and crowds and weariness.

Though the followers of fashion may prefer vast hotels and famous watering-places, it is not in such resorts that the really refined and intellectual

people of our cities are to be found. They do not need to rush among staring strangers to display their fine apparel and attract admiring attention. Change to them means retirement to some mountain-village or fair river-valley, where, in quiet, well-ordered farm-houses, they may find freedom from conventional restraints.

Great benefits cannot but arise from the mingling of such families with the inhabitants of country towns; and it is difficult to determine which party has the advantage. On the one hand, the gain to the farmer is direct and practical. It furnishes him a market at his own table for the produce of his fields. The wife, by her extra labor, secures the means for replenishing her wardrobe and adding to the comforts of her home, — two objects always uppermost in a housekeeper's mind. If she has something to spare for her daughter's attire, the latter will prize it the more that she has learned how to cut and adorn it after the latest mode.

A certain amount of intelligence is diffused throughout remote villages by this influx of summer visitors. They bring with them, to their transient homes, their literature, their culture, their smooth, considerate manners; and something of all this is transmitted by contact. A certain county in New Hampshire, once the stronghold of ignor-

ance, is now claimed to be one of the most enlightened in the State; and this change is attributed solely to the numbers of educated travellers whom its fine scenery has drawn thither during the past twenty years.

By this means, the prejudices naturally existing between town and country are, in a great measure, removed. The farmer loves no less his sterling independence, and his frank, ready words; but he sees that they may exist in others with neither rudeness of accent nor bluntness of speech. The strangers find that while their host lacks the graces of polite society, he yet preserves under his rough exterior a heart warmer and truer, a nature more generous, a life more pure and right-seeking, than are often met with in their drawing-rooms at home. They learn, also, to respect his wisdom in common matters, and his thorough acquaintance with all the objects about him; and to envy the keen alertness of the senses through which this knowledge has been derived. Country people learn almost every thing from observation; city people from books. Urchins from the crowded sidewalks are none the worse for escaping from grammar-schools awhile, and gaining an entirely new range of facts in an entirely new way. Though the new playmates may shock them by their strange pronunciation of the commonest words, and may

be innocent of collars, neckties, and other superfluities of dress, they find them to be prime fellows for scouring the woods and the fields. It is from them they ascertain under what skies they must bait for pickerel, how to tell good beechnuts at a glance, and what is the best way of killing a snake. They will no longer have vague ideas that cucumbers grow in slices, and potatoes dangle from the tops of the plants.

These benefits of increased means, intelligence, and courteous consideration for others, the townspeople may obtain; and the city families acquire greater practical knowledge, a regard for sturdy virtues, and a delightful sense of freedom from restraint and from household cares. This, too, with no mention of the great boon of health, which they chiefly sought, and which has come to them in the fresh breezes and unstinted sunlight.

Probably few of us ever think what we should lose if this yearly access to fields and woods were denied us. Some adventurous thinkers, peering far into the future, have prophesied a time that they say must surely come, when the towns and settlements on our little planet shall so increase and extend that they must meet each other, and the whole world become one vast city. Pekin, London, and New York will be held as its different

wards, separated by seas and rivers. Of course, then, not a respectable forest, much less a wilderness, can be had for love or money. Like the crowded Chinese, we shall afford gardens only on the roofs of our houses; and poor relations must live in the rivers on rafts. Then the earth will have no dark corners, no untrodden wastes, no *terrae incognitae*, to lose its Dr. Livingstones in. Poor Thoreau! We hope his perturbed spirit may never be suffered to visit us in those days, but that he, and his friend Mr. Lo, may wander for ever in the spacious hunting grounds and blazed forests of some unpeopled sphere. Explorers and land-discoverers will find themselves completely out of business. Even our Adirondacks will become the metropolitan home of a race of Sybarites; in whose literature shall loom up the dim tradition of a stalwart hero named Murray, with his brave band of followers; and the story of their adventures in the wilderness will be regarded as the doubtful tales of a mythological age.

But some time before the crowd, which these prophets foretell, shall become so dense, we may be sure that the spirit of materialism will shelve off the sides of the Rocky Mountains into vine-terraces; that the Dismal Swamp will be converted into a cranberry pasture; and that even Sahara itself, by means of a judicious admixture of

clay-loom and chemical fertilizers, and a wonderful system of irrigation, will become one vast grain-field, rolling up to the very shoulders of the Mountains of the Moon. We fancy, however, — and it is a cheering thought, — that within the Arctic Circle silence and solitude must be preserved, long after the temperate zones are a hive of humanity. Some live Yankee in the dim future may succeed in training hops upon the North Pole, and may make a Cunard line of steamers pay upon the open Polar Sea; but it will be after Alaska has become a hanging-garden.

The prospect thus held out to us is by no means a pleasant one. We poor mortals who have nerves, and who like elbow-room, may rejoice that we are not to be in our descendants' shoes. Seaside-resorts and hotels at the Springs must still be accessible; but what will the people do who long for an entire change of scene, and a taste of savage wildness? Will they take their summer-trip through Greenland, to the region of glaciers and ice-fields, and there live in perpetual daylight, with the great sun always sailing round and round over their heads, never giving them a sunset for variety, nor any way to determine when it is bed-time? Will the young women learn to steer icebergs, and the young men to shoot walruses and polar bears? and will these last mortals flirt cruelly

with pretty little Esquimaux at the doors of their fur-huts, inviting them out on a bright, sunny night to try their new sledge and tandem-team of reindeers, with a supper of boiled blubber on the way? Or will our successors discover aerial and spacial navigation, and keep summer-villas in the moon? We can almost see the squads of happy girls, on a coolish morning, sitting around the burnt-out craters of that now empty planet, their muslin robes trailing adown the rough slope, and their jewelled fingers spread out over the warm, hollow summits. We may be sure they will all have telescopes of a wondrous power, compared with which Lord Ross's is a baby; and that they will do their best to find out what the stay-at-home clubs are about on moony nights.

Well, well, the war-whoop may die out from our land, but it is a long day yet, thank fortune, before forests and prairies shall be no more.

XIV.

A SOJOURN IN ARCADY.

WHEN the ornamental young lady leaves her city home to indulge for a while in the sweets of a country life, she is in a fair way to study one phase of American society hitherto unknown to her, and to learn from it a few prosaic truths. Poets and romancers have made her familiar with the scenery of their pastorals; and though she has no hope of finding the hill-sides of her new resort sprinkled with coy little shepherdesses, who sit with crooks and garlanded hats amid flocks of sleepy sheep, while love-sick swains blow oaten pipes at their feet, yet she does fancy that something not altogether alien to the pretty, idyllic existence that has got into books will be possible to her there.

After a few weeks she will realize that nowhere are the hard, bare facts of material life so squarely faced as in our own country towns, where not only the beauty of poetry and art, but even the charms of Nature herself, find little or no recognition. She will learn, too, that between her own occupa-

tion and amusements and those of her country sisters there is scarcely more correspondence than if she had been born on the opposite side of the globe.

These thoughts could not but arise when my friend Madge came in this morning to bid us good-by. She is off to-day for her summer campaign; this time neither to the sea-side, the Springs, nor the White Hills, but to an old-fashioned farm-house somewhere in Vermont. The town is charming and retired, she tells me; the house a roomy old mansion, neat and quiet, and embowered under great elms; and the family an independent farmer and wife, who never had a boarder before, and who consent to take her only as a favor. It promises a novel existence to this city maiden, who has spent her summer days among the crowds at fashionable watering-places; and she is enchanted at the prospect of so complete a change.

In a burst of friendly confidence, she declared herself sick of the world,—this poor little nun, just turned of eighteen, and as fine a butterfly as one would wish to see. Great hotels have become to her stupid abodes, where there is nothing to be done, from morning till night, but to dress, and eat, and drift about the piazzas. Flirting—to which, I grieve to say, she is not averse—she

asserts to be impossible in such places, for there is not a young man to be met there nowadays, at least nobody worth killing. And so it is that she decides to turn her back upon all vain pomps and vanities, and betake herself to utter seclusion; though in spite of her sighs, she intends, no doubt, to emerge in time for next winter's round of parties and balls.

You should have heard her rhapsodize so gloriously over the delights she is to find in this new retreat. Such feasting on fruits and berries and cream, such rambles through wood and meadow, such sound, refreshing slumber at night, and such siestas at noonday! One would think she was to live, like the butterflies, by sipping nectar from flower-cups and sleeping in the cool, rocking tents of the lilies. Especially was she rejoiced that she would not have to spend her days in dressing and adorning herself, — as if there were a place where Madge would not do that! Were she to be cast away on a desert island, she could no more keep from braiding her crimps and looping up her overskirts in the latest style, than a bird could keep from singing in a wilderness. Wherever she goes she must take her finery and her fashions. Trains of vaporous muslin will float over the sanded floors of that old farm-house; crisp, pale silks rustle in the rush-bottomed chairs; and the prim front cham-

ber be turned into a bewildered boudoir, with French gewgaws running riot over the tall bureau-tops, and bournous and Indian mantles littering the straight tables. Somewhere among the hay-makers will wander a jaunty hat and a scarlet cloak; for it is much to be feared lest this pretty charmer may seek to astound the natives with her gay adornments, and even to get up desperate flirtations with the farmers' sons, if only, like Lady Clara Vere de Vere, "to break a country heart for pastime, ere she goes to town."

Now that my friend is gone, and her pleasant laugh and merry stories will be heard no more for so many weeks, I fall to dreaming over all that she has said. She is a winsome little body, and one would fain believe that she is to walk straight into

and oyster-pies, and had such glowing visions of her country fare. She was to breakfast, she said, on fresh eggs and broiled chicken; revel, at dinner, on half a dozen kinds of vegetables just pulled from the vines; and sup on great bowls of cream and dishes of berries, cooler and sweeter than any she ever ate before. Stamped cakes of butter, hard as stone and yellow as gold, loomed vaguely in her talk; there was to be bread, light and snowy, and piled in wafer slices; sugary cakes filled with caraway seeds; custards and jellies, and curds of new cheese. All this she was to eat in some breezy room, looking out under vine-sprays upon a blossoming garden.

But oh! what if Phyllis gives her fried steak for breakfast, as no doubt Phyllis will, and not sirloin at that; and would no more think of broiling a chicken, nor of broiling any thing, than if such a mode of cooking were never invented? What if the eggs be sent to market; and omelettes unknown; and the cream skimmed off for churning; and the bread heavy and green and odorous with saleratus? What if fried pork be served for her dinner; and fish never seen; and vegetables and berries be few, for lack of fingers to pick them; and dried cake and underdone pies hold the places of honor at the rural teas? What if ice is a myth; and the butter melts with fervent heat; and water

simmers in the pitcher? What if Corydon sits down to table in his shirt-sleeves, never dreaming that he thus commits the unpardonable sin; and the blinds be shut close in the face of the flies, so that no glimpse of leaf or garden can be had? Such things have been; but it would be cruel for Madge to find them in the paradise of her dreams.

What visions she conjured up of sound, unbroken sleep the whole night long! for she was "to rise with the lark and with the lark to bed," as she told us in her pretty bravura, and was sure she should sleep like a top. Just how a top sleeps, or what precise hours the larks keep, she would be puzzled to tell; but it is plain that she means to atone thoroughly for last winter's revelries. A cricket on the hearth was to sing her to sleep; and she revealed a dim notion that the sheets were to smell of lavender, like those in the inn where Ik. Walton lodged so comfortably when he went a-fishing. Madge thinks that all the world goes to bed by gaslight, reposes on hair mattresses under fleecy blankets, and has an exhaustless supply of fresh water pouring into marble basins. But in that best chamber there is a bed of live geese-feathers, the pride of Phyllis's heart; and over that a layer of cotton coverlets, and pillows so small that she must set them on end, to keep her head on a breathing level. In place of her

bath-room, one pitcher of water holds the odor of a decayed cistern in its yellow depths; and towels are limited in supply, and fine as cambric handkerchiefs. She thought to lean on her window-sill after twilight, gazing at the midsummer moon and inhaling the dewy fragrance of the fields; but that window goes up with a jerk, and stops midway where no button exists to hold it; and a full canopy of cloth enshrouds its panes, and sends its fringed edges flapping into her eyes. Then a shade of green paper, — most unmanageable of things that be, — rattles under it at every wind-stir, and submits to be rolled up only after Madge has resolved never to succumb.

Vexations, indeed, abound; but it is not her part to complain, nor to give orders to a hostess who does not suspect that there can be a change for the better in any part of her house. So, when the kerosene lamp which Madge takes to her room has gone through all its amiable tricks of smoking fiercely against the chimney, exhaling pestiferous odors, and finally succumbing altogether to a sudden whiff of air, she will pick her way about by starlight, like a little owl; or will secretly purloin a tallow candle, and set it ablaze before the mirror where she braids her tresses. And this mirror must be reckoned among her troubles, for it is fixed to the wall so that it cannot be swung, and deigns

to reveal only the tops of her crimps to her upturned gaze.

Moreover, Madge likes to sleep in the morning as long as she pleases, and is wont to indulge in delicious naps after the rest of her city household are astir. This reprehensible habit will find no countenance in the new abode. No one calls her, to be sure; but, at what seems the middle of the night, robins begin noisy chatterings in the great elms, so that she is wide awake before dawn. A little later, and all the chickens, ducks and geese gather for a parade under her window, and clamor for their rations. Stealing up from the kitchen comes a clatter of pots and pans, dread forewarnings of breakfast at hand; and the adjoining yard

kind to tell her that she treads down his tall grass most wofully when she hunts for strawberries, and that he would rather have a hail-storm lodge his wheat than to see her wandering through it; so she roams everywhere at will. All other exercise is denied her; for no one has any time to spend in driving about for sight-seeing, and as for riding horseback, there is not a lady's saddle to be found in the town.

Madge considers the best parlor a dark and gloomy cave; and she makes a sitting-room of the steps of the piazza, in the shade of the lilac-trees, much to the surprise of Phyllis, who never sits down outside the four walls of her domain. As the little gypsy leans her head back against the clapboards of the house, and looks up into the great horse-chestnut before her, she sees, in her mind's eye, a light hammock swinging within the shade and the coolness; and she fancies how entrancing it would be to lie there and read her novel, with the sweet breeze stirring the leaves.

But she has an instinctive sense that it would not do to mention this dream, and that such indolence with malice prepense would meet with little favor here. For the first time in her life she feels that she is an incongruity amid her surroundings. It seems, somehow, to be a crime for her to have journeyed hither only to be idle and to enjoy her-

self. She does imagine, however, that the young haymaker who comes up to dinner with Corydon, and who blushes so violently when she passes him the butter, must be wonder-struck and delighted by her delicate beauty and strange, rich attire. And that he surely ought to be. When he finds himself served by such a wondrous little goddess, with speech more silvery and courteous than he ever heard before, he should feel tempted to go down on his knees before her, mentally at least, and be willing to prove himself her abject slave. Her crimped tresses should be threads of spun gold to his dazed vision, her eyes soft, luminous stars, her Greek brow and chin — for Madge has a Greek brow and chin — should set him to thinking of that divine stranger whom Æneas and his comrade met in the woods beyond Carthage.

But alas! the young haymaker never read the poets, ancient or modern; and he entertains no chivalric nonsense about woman. He regards her as a wise provision of nature for getting dinners ready when men are hungry, and for taking care of the house when they are gone; and provided she can put a meal of victuals upon the table in good shape when the clock strikes twelve, do a smart churning before breakfast, have the family wash out on the line in advance of her neighbors, knit blue woollen stockings in the evening without

a waste of kerosene, and spend no time in gadding or gossiping, he has nothing to say against her anyhow. But our Madge does not know how to do any thing like this; she is, at best, but one of the idle lilies that neither toil nor spin. And such beings, though they may embarrass him with their finery and manners, appear to him useless drones. It is to be feared that he even calls her a lazy lounger, good for nothing but to spend money and to make folks wait upon her. So, when she crosses the field in her white morning-dress, with its fluted ruffles and bright, flying sash-ends, it is well that she does not hear what the young haymaker is saying, as he stands there wiping his scythe with grass, for it is not at all gallant or complimentary.

Madge is on her way to the wood when she passes the field; and she means to find there a pleasant spot for reading the novel she has under her arm. I see her making off toward the hill in the hot sun, and even hear the pale, silvery lichens crunch beneath her footsteps. Startled sheep bound away before the apparition of this gorgeous little fairy, as she heaves into sight over the pasture-hill; and long branches bend and rustle behind her, as she disappears within the wood, into the realm of ferns and cool mosses. There are snakes sometimes in those woods; their glassy eyes watch her now from under damp leaves, and

her skirt-hem almost brushes against their forked tongues as she moves along. Overhead, bead-like eyes look down upon her, in hushed observance, from silent boughs. She seats herself within the spreading roots of an old tree, and thinks she has at last realized one of her dreams. Leaf-shadows shimmer over the pages that she spreads before her; and the trickle of the brook near by sounds infinitely sweet. Through half-shut eyes she takes in the full beauty of the scene, and then turns to her book, and is lost to all but the adventures of Angelina and her noble knight. The inhabitants of the wood dare to breathe and to move about as before. Birds twitter faintly from the boughs; a couple of daddy-long-legs start out on a race

bushes, — such eyes as Juno herself was said to have, and a pair of budding horns amid the leaves; for a young heifer has come upon the scene of action, and is wondering who this visitor may be. But Madge does chance to discern the snake in his covert; and fearful is the smothered cry and sudden the plunges with which she departs headlong from her paradise. She snatches the Leghorn hat by its ribbon, thereby finishing the race of the daddy-long-legs at the second heat, and bringing the explorations of insect scouting-parties to an untimely end. The birds, the heifer, the bugs, the mosquitoes, the snakes, all pause to stare once more as she departs; and once more the scarlet-cloaked fairy is seen upon the top of the pasture-hill. Rough scrambling it has proved for the French slippers; their rosettes are filled with sticks and grasses; and the train of vaporous muslin has caught on a tree-stump, and its hem is rent in twain. Madge will never again venture within that wood; it is to her, ever after, the fearsome home of snakes and goblins; an enchanted forest, haunted by shapes upon which she dares not look.

Will Madge tell us of these her troubles in Arcady when she returns in the Fall, and we are so glad to look once more into her face, and to hear the cheery carol of her greeting? Whatever her sorrows may be — and they shall be heard with

decorous patience — it will delight us to behold that in spite of them all she has grown to be a full-faced, nut-brown maid, with a fresh sparkle in her eyes and a stronger love of home in her heart.

Continuous daily toil from five in the morning until nine at night, — sixteen steady hours a day the whole year round, — would seem almost unendurable with so little pleasure and diversion. She lives apart from friends and acquaintances, and seldom meets them in genial intercourse; she goes out to no lectures, no theatre, no concert, and no museum; indulges in no shopping nor sight-seeing. Once in a season, perhaps, she rides to the nearest city to make her larger purchases; and rarely afterwards, unless on an errand to some sick neighbor or to the village store, is she seen upon the road. Her constant labors are all carried on within four bare and narrow walls, without change of scene or hope of variety.

It is not strange that her strength becomes impaired, and that she often finds herself at middle age afflicted with disease. And the physical weakness which must inevitably result from such a life is greatly increased by an astonishing ignorance of the manifold causes that tend to produce it. This is especially the case in towns lying remote from the great centres of intelligence. Practices and food that cities have learned to discard as most pernicious are still clung to in our farmers' homes, without any suspicion of their injurious effects. Visitors avoid, if they can, their diet of fried pork, their feather-beds, their cotton coverlets, and their

ill-aired rooms, and gladly escape out of doors for exhilarating rambles through field and forest; but these are supposed to be mere whims of their guests, indulged in without reason.

Instead of covering their rocky hill-sides with flocks of browsing sheep, that would furnish a most digestible and nutritious meat, an abundance of wool, and require but little care in feeding, our farmers, one and all, keep shut up in foul pens, to pollute the atmosphere of their dwellings, an animal whose flesh can supply them with no firm muscle, while it fosters, even in its healthiest state, the whole train of scrofulous diseases that are the curse of our people. These diseases are almost unknown to the Jews, to whom pork is forbidden food; and the effect of its use seems to be recognized in the very word scrofula, which is the Latin for a little pig. If sheep cannot be kept on account of dogs, it would be better to sacrifice the more useless of the two, and leave the white flocks to roam over their furzy pasture-lands undisturbed. This peculiar animal food which intelligent people have learned to abjure, is usually cooked in the very manner which renders it most indigestible, — by soaking in boiling fat, in other words, by frying. The wholesome bread raised by pure yeast, once the pride of our farm-houses, has given place to abominable compounds, whose chemical ingredients

are ruinous to both teeth and stomach. Everywhere around these houses sweeps a current of pure air; but it is as carefully excluded from the rooms as if it were a poison. Fortunately, however, it possesses the witch's privilege, and enters unbidden through cracks and keyholes. Walking is nowhere held in such ill repute as in these same towns, where there is so much beauty in earth and sky to tempt one abroad. It is an offence in the eyes of all for a woman to be seen sauntering along the roads, and gadding-about is held to be one of the heinous sins. A horse and wagon must be brought to the door if the distance to be traversed is but half a mile, so that daily exercise in the open air is indulged in only by school-children and those who work in the fields. These influences of excessive toil, lack of diversion, unhealthy food, and ill-aired rooms, submitted to partly from necessity and partly from ignorance as to their results, cannot but seriously impair the health of all who experience them.

The want of any external interest or excitement, which is such a serious evil in the life of the farmer's wife, is felt still more keenly by the young people around her. The local politics, the town-meetings, the election of civil officers, the management of church and school affairs, over which men chat every evening with such unfailing spirit at

the village store, have as little interest for them as for her; and the vivacity of youth demands a greater zest and stimulus than such a place supplies. It is this hunger for adventure and amusement which leads so many country boys and girls at the present day to forsake their quiet homes for the eager life of crowded cities.

Nor can we wonder at this. The austerity of our Puritan fathers forbade the introduction of those ancient country-sports, those active games and pleasant merry-makings, which serve in other lands to enliven the lonely, material pursuits of rural towns. Even the few diversions that were possible in the past have gradually disappeared. Winter evening spelling-schools have died out, probably never to be revived; and singing-schools no longer flourish in their pristine glory. The old holidays of Spring training and Fall muster have departed, leaving nothing in their place. Our two or three national gala days, such as the Fourth of July and Washington's Birthday, which are only patronizingly observed in cities, receive in the smaller villages no attention; and except, perhaps, a sober Agricultural Fair, or the crowd that gathers on Election Day, there is little to vary the sameness of life, and absolutely nothing that provides for that necessity of human nature for spontaneity and fun.

Even with all possible helps and diversions, a country life must remain for the most part a life of solitude, which nothing but a well-stored mind can render always attractive. But in these communities where the resources of education are most needed, they are most scantily supplied; and, instead of progressing to meet the demands of the present time, the public schools of our smaller towns have steadily degenerated within the past twenty years. They have failed as surely in the quality of their instruction and the number of their pupils, as those of our cities have improved. Many of the old academies, whose impetus and influence were once so widely felt, have lost their importance, or ceased work altogether. Under the best management, six months of schooling seem little enough for all that young minds have to learn; but with a change of teachers for every term, and the repetitions of previous advances that are required by such long intervals of idleness, the real progress of pupils from year to year is very slight.

Moreover, the studies pursued are not such as will lead these students to derive much benefit or pleasure from their future life. With no knowledge of the natural sciences, country boys and girls grow up surrounded by a world of beauty to which their eyes are never opened. Dwelling amid fields of flowers, they learn nothing of those

wonderful teachings of botany which would clothe with attraction every weed that blossoms by the roadside. The various trees whose branches interlace above their heads are scarcely known to them by name, and their peculiarities of leaf and bark are unnoted. Stone walls and outcropping ledges are only so many rocks, not minerals of diverse structure, age, and origin, to be examined with delight. The habits of the queer little creatures whose nests and dwellings they discover in sand-banks and beside ponds are matters of mere speculation. If, when their eyes were quick to see and their limbs to move, they had been taught to observe and study all the miracles of field and forest, what new beauty and interest would have been given to their daily lives! This need of an improvement in their system of district-school education cannot be too strongly urged upon our country towns; and in the growing importance of the natural sciences, and of all intellectual culture, it is one that they should no longer treat with careless indifference.

If any influences could be brought to bear to retain in their village homes those energetic young men and women who come up every year to our overcrowded cities, a great benefit would result to all. The boys would lead happier and healthier lives, and would in time restore to their native

towns their old prosperity and thrift; the girls would well exchange the close air and unvaried toil of factories for labors by their own firesides, and would lighten in this way those grievous burdens that now weigh down the shoulders of our farmers' wives. There can be no new immigration to revive these old settlements; and they must themselves inaugurate the measures that shall enable them to preserve their influence, and even their existence, in the future that is before them.

XVI.

INVALIDISM AS A PURSUIT.

NO one who has read Hawthorne's book upon his English home can have forgotten the broad ridicule that he pours out on the subject of the British matron. The strongest adjectives, the most gross and material comparisons, are there employed to describe her stolid aspect and clumsy, corpulent frame. Contrasted with such ponderous amplitude, the women of his own country appeared like graceful sylphs, creatures born of light and air, with barely enough of the earth-born about them to keep them on the planet. He looked at this feature of foreign life with American eyes; and it was not possible for him to behold a race of broad-shouldered, ruddy-faced dames, who were able to walk half a dozen miles before breakfast, and to toss off a mug of ale with a hearty smack by way of refreshment, and be willing to allow them the possession of a single feminine charm. If they had had megrims after their morning tramps, or been forced to call in the physician for their shattered nerves, he might have forgiven them:

but, instead, they set bravely to work on household accounts, and ordered the cook to furnish a substantial dinner. Truly, here was a nation of blooming Di Vernons and Lady Gay Spankers gone to seed.

On the other hand, her Majesty's noblemen, authors and penny-a-liners travelling among us have much to say about the apparent ill-health of our people, and especially of our women. They concede their graceful forms and vivacious, engaging manners, but declare their waists to be waspish, their complexions sallow, and their nerves unstrung.

And it is probably true that the women of no two nations present a stronger contrast to each other than these we have mentioned. They are the representatives of two extremes. If the one race is too much addicted to roast beef and the creature-comforts of home, the other indulges immoderately in the whimsicalities of fashion and in frivolous dissipations. We boast, in fine, of our brilliant belles, England of her efficient wives and mothers.

With all our predilection for the women of our own land, we must admit that for want of physical endurance their lives are, to a great degree, lamentable failures. To produce immediate effects in youth they sacrifice the worth of a lifetime. We hear much of the beauty of our countrywomen,

but it is too often the beauty of an hour, as evanescent as the tints of a rainbow, or the flush of a sunset-cloud. Because our young girls go to foreign courts and outshine the more stolid, thickset, undeveloped maidens there, we think it a matter of national congratulation, and rejoice in the glowing accounts of their triumphs which reach us from abroad. But it should be rather a matter of regret; for it is premature bloom, produced only at the sacrifice of all the substantial qualities which their womanhood will need. Their piquant manners and easy grace in drawing-rooms have been gained by a round of social dissipation, to which they are introduced at an age when the girls of other countries are leading the simple and regular life of children. In later years we shall find those stolid, retiring girls developed into comely and happy matrons, carrying into middle age the charms of freshness and good health; while our returned belles will be faded past recognition, and forced to spend their days in retirement, with lingering disease.

This invalidism of which we speak is apparent on every hand. One may have a wide acquaintance among women and yet know but one or two who have no physical ills to complain of. The majority everywhere are constantly ailing, and incapable of vigorous exertion. In any summer

hotel containing, it may be, a hundred ladies from various parts of the land, there will be but a very small number who are capable of an occasional walk of several miles; and they are regarded as little less than monstrosities by the companions whom they leave behind. Many of these guests may believe that a stroll of half a mile every morning, in the absence of other exercise, would be beneficial; but after a few desperate attempts they give it up as too fatiguing, and are content to vibrate about the piazzas. The greater number make no pretensions to physical ability, but sit in the parlors day after day, sunk in cushioned rocking-chairs, and pecking away at embroidery over which they are never in danger of losing breath.

The strength that youth gives seldom lasts our girls beyond their teens. Nothing is more sad than to note the rapid fading of young women after marriage. The friends we loved at school, who were full of life and jollity, and seemed born for a splendid, triumphant womanhood, are scarcely recognizable when we meet them a few years after their bright wedding. The abundant wishes for health and happiness showered upon them on that festive day appear to have blessed only the husband. He has grown handsomer and heartier with the lapse of time; but the poor little wife, with her sunken cheeks, lost color and wasted smiles,

looks like some heart-sick wraith of the girl we remember. And physicians tell us that the proportion of such young women, well educated and tenderly reared, who die in child-birth is great enough to be startling.

It is not necessary to travel abroad in order to see that this general invalidism among women is peculiar to the American people. We have all met in our midst those well-preserved English matrons whom we have taken at first for young girls, and then have found them to be the mothers of half-a-dozen rosy children. In Western cities we see the broad-shouldered German fraus doing work enough to kill our own countrywomen, and yet always ready to play with their children, and to accompany Fritz of an evening to the adjoining

advantage. Every one, however, who travels through our country towns must observe that the women there are, as a general rule, afflicted with weakness and disease. A short walk soon exhausts them, and they appear to subsist on quack medicines and herb teas.

This condition of things has become so established and so familiar that it is affecting even our ideal standard of beauty. The full, robust forms which the Greeks gave to their goddesses seem to us no part of female loveliness. An American sculptor unhampered by the models of the past would represent the Three Graces as lolling on sofa-cushions, with a bottle of salts in one hand and a fan in the other. For them to lead off in a lively, buxom dance, with free, swinging arms and an air of tireless enjoyment, would be pronounced, by any well-bred critic, as far too rude and boisterous. With us, to be ladylike is to be lifeless, inane, and dawdling. Since people who are ill must necessarily possess these qualities of manner, from a lack of vital energy and spirits, it follows that they are the ones studiously copied as models of female attractiveness. Clear, vigorous speech, quick movements, and a ringing laugh, are things to be condemned and repressed, as far as possible. Should young ladies attempt a run or frolic in the garden after they have passed into long dresses

and chignons, it would scandalize all their friends; and to eat as much at the tea-table as hunger craves would subject them to a sarcastic lecture from older sisters. Instead, therefore, of being properly ashamed of physical infirmities, our fine ladies aspire to be called *invalides;* and the long, French accent with which they roll off the last syllable of this word seems to give it a peculiar charm. If you happen upon a group of them conversing together on a bright summer afternoon, you will be sure to find them endeavoring to outshine each other in the recital of past illnesses. One did not leave her room for three months, and had every ray of light excluded on account of terrible pains in her eyes. Another follows with the declaration that she was six months in the care of a physician who visited her twice a day; and that nothing but gruel and beef-tea passed her lips. A third can beat that, for all foreign medical men assure her that her spine is hopelessly diseased, and that she must expect to endure excruciating agonies as long as she lives. So they go on, like Aunt Pullet in George Eliot's story, bragging of the empty medicine-bottles and pill-boxes that they will leave behind them when they die. We have even heard a husband wind off a glowing enumeration of his wife's accomplishments with the remark that she was an invalid, as though that

revealed at one stroke her fine manners and high social position, as well as the ample means which could allow him to support such a helpless elegance. Yet we very often find that these mere physical wrecks do, after all, endure an amount of late dancing, oyster-suppers and elaborate apparelling from which Hebe herself would shrink.

This state of public opinion, and not our abused climate, nor the manifest overwork produced by a lack of efficient servants, is the chief cause of the ill-health so prevalent among us. That such an opinion is utterly wrong, and disgraceful to us as a nation, no sensible person will deny. Even the fact, of which we are justly proud, that our countrywomen are the best educated in general matters and morally the most self-reliant of any in the world, cannot compensate for their want of vital stamina and endurance. It is better to be strong than to be vivacious, to bequeath to a land a robust and vigorous posterity than to fill its salons with a race of youthful prodigies haranguing by gaslight on the rare objectivity of the last novel and the false deductions of the Darwinian theory.

Of mental training no man or woman can have too much; but it should be accompanied by a corresponding knowledge and training of the physical powers. In the absence of those hardy habits and that inherited strength which enable English-

women to preserve for so long a time the splendid bloom and vigor of their youth, let the intellectual culture of our girls be carried far enough to acquaint them with the needs and functions of the body, and to show them the power its condition exercises over all mental and moral excellence. This culture is now too meagre, since it stops short of this.

Our moral training is likewise deficient; for it does not yet teach that to break any of God's physical laws is as wrong as to break a moral law, and that the former are not included among the Ten Commandments simply because their pains and penalties are made so immediate and palpable as to need no written enforcement.

When women shall learn to desire good health as essential to both beauty and efficiency, and shall look upon their present pernicious indulgences, as not only inexpedient, but as morally wrong, we may hope to see our people taking a vast stride in all departments of progress. With an improved physique, the mind and the morals will attain a higher level, and the national life be regenerate. Then, late parties, unhealthy food, tight and insufficient clothing, will be abandoned to the Hottentots, to whom we shall send missionaries for their enlightenment.

Disease must in time be considered as either a

disgrace or a misfortune. If it be self-imposed by wanton carelessness, the sufferer should atone without a murmur for her sins; but if it be an inherited malady, or one sent as a mysterious dispensation, then no sympathy can be too warm, no words too gentle, no airs too softly tempered, for her who is called upon to endure it. Deprived of health, she will lack that which makes the sunshine golden and bird-songs glad; and all that we can offer will be but a slight compensation for what Nature denies.

XVII.

THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION OF GIRLS.

THE prevailing invalidism of women, which gives rise to so many evils in our domestic life, will be no matter of surprise if we consider the training which the greater number of our girls receive. We allow them to acquire a knowledge of the elementary studies taught in schools, take care to add to these a few graceful accomplishments, and, if possible, some taste in dress and adornment, and then regard their education as complete. No suspicion is entertained that one important part of their nature has been entirely neglected. But in all that we have done there has not been the slightest provision for strengthening and developing their physical powers. Instead of teaching them the supreme importance of health, and the precautions that are needed to preserve it, the aim of society seems to be to inculcate a disregard for its requirements, to destroy at the start any taste they may possess for invigorating sports, and to doom them to begin in their infantine years that round of senseless gayetics

which robs them of childhood before they have ever known its simple delights.

We lament the weakness and suffering of the women of our own time, but what must be the future of these bright-eyed, delicate little creatures growing up around us, whose pale faces and subdued manner tell of more evening excitement, mental stimulus, and social restraint, than any generation before them has ever known? Their diet, their dress, their amusements, seem intended to weaken and destroy; and if American mothers were bent upon the slaughter of their own innocents they could not devise a more effective means for its accomp'ishment.

We are told that children were once fed on plain, nutritious food, were given a bowl of bread and milk for supper, and put to bed when it was dark under the table. But at the board of their elders they now expect to be served with all the abominations in the way of edibles which we have invented for our own poisoning. Warm mince pies, nuts and raisins, afford them pleasure at dessert; and hot saleratus-biscuit and plum-cake suffice for their supper. When the little dears are taken unawares with colic, we resign ourselves and call it a mysterious dispensation of Providence; when their faces grow thin and their eyes sallow and bloodshot, we call the climate hard names, or

have suspicions that they are falling martyrs to spelling-lessons and the multiplication-table. Our hearts ache at the sight, and we are moved to bestow upon them papers of poisoned candy and liberal supplies of bonbons. Since we cannot be cruel enough to limit them to the oat-meal puddings, the milk porridge, and plain fare on which English and Scotch children subsist, we pander to their appetites, and bequeath to them, in consequence, indigestion, nervousness, and all that inheritance of woe which comes from an abused stomach.

To this poisoning of bad food we add the pernicious diversions of late evening parties. Children who are so unfortunate as to be born in cities must necessarily be deprived of much of the healthful amusement by which country boys and girls develop their little frames. They can have no broad fields to run and shout over, no brooks for trouting, no woods for nutting; and only when peculiarly favored with the vicinage of back alleys and waste yards can they indulge in marbles and mud-pies. But it surely is not necessary to invent in their places such a senseless, such a diabolical, pastime, — if we may be allowed a mild term, — as the children's parties at present so much in vogue. These must be the latest devices of Satan for winning to himself the souls and bodies of our popula-

tion, before they are old enough to resist him. Considering how they weary and dwarf the body, pervert the mind from its proper work and fill it with vanity, and how they stimulate and corrupt the heart, we wonder that any thoughtful being can countenance them, much more that any loving mother can devise and support them for her own best beloved. If nothing else should reveal the ignorance and folly of our fashionable leaders, and the servility of those who copy them, this practice would be sufficient. At an hour when children ought to be singing "Put me in my little bed," they are delivered into the hands of the household Abigail, to be arrayed in frocks of tarlatan and slippers of bronze, with a halo of "golden, crisped locks," set free from the crimping pins that have begirt their tired heads. Thus are they prepared for the festivities of the german, where they are to dispense favors to incipient beaux, and receive tiny bouquets tendered with lisping compliments under the blaze of brilliant lights. In the late pauses of the dance they refresh themselves with sherbets and cake, and then return for one more fevered whirl before they are taken home to bed.

As they are pursuing their education meanwhile, they must rise betimes the next morning and start with their primers for school; where they have just time to discuss dancing-partners and the strik-

ing toilettes of last night's carousal before they nod in unbidden sleep over their slates. With physical strength exhausted, and minds filled with petty triumphs and remembered flatteries, what wonder that the abstractions of mixed fractions and relative pronouns prove too dull to fix their thoughts? Should an ambitious desire to shine in their class still survive these social excitements, then health must go, in an effort to carry on with credit the two diverse roles of the student and the belle.

What a contrast is this to the life led by the children of other nations! Clothed in plain attire, and kept to early hours and simple food, they regard parties as the diversion of older people, and pursue their studies in tranquil seclusion. When these are completed, a formal "coming out" marks their entrance upon the social gayeties of which, thus far, they have only heard. Our American girls of ordinary families are always "out;" and their faces are known in every assembly, and worn thin and pale by youthful dissipation, long before they have received their diplomas at school. They acquire the arts of flirtation in their nursery bibs, and become experienced coquettes before they have mastered the rule of three.

Boys, in their early years, suffer in the same way as girls from these baneful customs of our domes-

tic life; but they escape from them sooner, and their subsequent recreations are mostly such as lead them into the open air and the sunshine. Playing ball, fishing, boating, hunting, driving,—all tend to physical growth and well-being. In place of these, what is the girl taught to seek in leisure hours? Worsted work, crocheting, piano-playing, —pretty and fascinating employments, but serving to develop neither body nor mind. They confine her to the close air and dim light of our houses, when she should be steeping herself in sunlight and expanding her lungs in the breeze; they keep her motionless in easy chairs, when she should be strengthening her frame by the fullest exercise of growing muscles and fibres.

We cross a city common on Fast-day afternoon, and pause on the hill to survey the base-ball players, who are wielding their bats on the plain below and darting to their bases as though their lives depended upon making a home-run. Further on, we encounter a surging mass of small urchins tossing a foot-ball with wild shouts and frantic rushes. It is the nation's holiday; and we see that this leaping and screaming is good for the little fellows, and that thus they will best grow into men. But where are the girls meanwhile? In what spirited games are they strengthening their young limbs, throwing back their shoulders, and filling the deep-

est air-cells of their lungs with fresh oxygen? There glide a few of them upon the trim paths, arrayed in their finest, most burdensome attire, with arms pinned to their sides like the wings of a trussed fowl, and turning neither to the right hand nor the left as they move demurely past. They may glance aside to behold the wild sports of their brothers, but a proper sense of the ladylike and the becoming keeps them from moving at a faster pace, or discussing the scene before them in more animated tones. So they balance along on their high heels, holding parasols carefully in glove-cramped hands lest a drop of sunshine should touch their pallid cheeks. The greater number of their sisters are housed at home, hemming superfluous ruffles, or knitting tidies on which to lean their feeble heads.

Girls had formerly some out-door life and jollity; but nearly all the active sports in which they were wont to indulge seem abandoned. Vigorous exercise in running was once gained by rolling a hoop; but now we seldom see upon the uncrowded pavement the pretty picture of a little fresh-cheeked maiden pursuing her flying circlet of wood. And "I spy" and "Tag".—will this generation ever know such wild, hazardous pleasure as they gave? Whoever hears now the mystic rune of "Eeny, meeny, mony, mi," recited before a row

of anxious damsels, all braced for a swift start when the last decisive syllable shall strike? Even the breathless and plodding agonies of "Hop-Scotch" served to delight us by the hour, in other days; but its chalked diagram has vanished from our sidewalks. The pretty games of grace-hoop and battledoor deserved immortality, but they too have gone out, with all the other lost glories of childhood. Strolling along the shade-dappled sward of the orchard or the lawn, we hear no longer the swift beat of the shuttlecock striking against the ever-shifting battledoors, nor behold the uplifted head, the eager eyes, and the flushed cheeks of the two players, glowing with the exhilarating sport. More graceful games were never invented; and they strengthened the arms, trained the sight, and expanded the chest; but, alas! they are no longer possible when our girls are encased in tight bodices, and can neither swing their arms freely nor raise them above their heads. If children barely in their teens are put into corsets, we must expect that they will find frolics and hilarity burdensome to their young souls. We suspect this to be the reason for the general abandonment of such sports; and the fact that croquet requires only the downward movement of the arm, chiefly accounts for the continued favor in which it is held. This game we have as a compensation for all we have lost;

but it is serviceable only as tempting young ladies into the sunshine and air. The exercise it gives is almost nothing; one may dawdle about over the grass without activity or spirit, and still succeed in it. There is but little sharpening of the sight or ready tension of the muscles required, and no effort more violent than an occasional quick stroke under the boot-sole. Skating is invaluable as a winter pastime, and it keeps every fibre and faculty intent; but its brief day of popularity with girls seems to be over. No previous training has given them the physical stamina to endure such exertion.

The gymnastic evolutions of late so much in favor in our schools require girls to don a loose blouse for their performance; and if no other advantage results, it is a good thing for them to be conscious twice a week of some comparative freedom and comfort in dress. And the varied posing of body and limbs which they induce is certainly an improvement upon monotonous repose; but how much better is an active, enlivening game, where the movements are spontaneous and all the senses alive, than any methodical tossing of bean-bags, or concerted cracking of elbow-joints, under the eye of a calisthenic tutor! For the past few years Englishwomen have been trying to revive the grand old sport of archery, which serves so well

to train the eye and develop the muscles of the arm and chest; but so foreign is it to the habits and tastes of our countrywomen, wedded as they are to sedentary occupations, that we may never hope to hear the twanging of a bow-string or the whizzing of an arrow, over any lawn or meadow, now that the Indian has fled.

Walking is the only out-door exercise which boarding-schools encourage girls to attempt; and society considers no other as quite proper for them in after-life. But to follow behind their teacher in the slow regularity of a procession, as they are required to do at school, with no music or banners, or any of the gay accessories that enliven the processions of their elders, is sufficient in itself to disgust them with the exercise for the remainder of their days. A free ramble through wood and dale, in search of flowers and minerals, or from a mere love of scenery and wide skies, might imbue them with a taste for sauntering; and it would, for the time at least, bring a glow to their cheeks and a freshness and variety to their daily life; but any thing so exhilarating and irregular would be inconsistent with that character of *quasi*-prisoners, with which such institutions invest their students. And when, as young ladies, they venture abroad, with that elaborate elegance of apparel, that precision of manner, that mincing, lackadaisical gait,

which the world expects them to assume, swathed in veils, canopied by parasols, and clinging to the shady side of the street, we question whether the word exercise is not a misnomer, and whether such a gliding pageant can be said to live and move and have her being in any thorough sense. Walking, then, for most women is a farce; city ladies find it convenient, with cars and carriages, to avoid it as much as possible, and country women are firm in the belief that no one but tramps and beggars are ever seen on foot a mile from home.

Horseback-riding has its seasons of popularity; and the sight of a brave young equestrienne, with flying plume and fluttering skirt, dashing along some quiet avenue, is held to be a fine and picturesque thing. We are glad, however, that it is so rare a sight, and that very few, comparatively, can indulge in this hazardous pastime; for as long as fashion requires that a girl shall sit upon the horse in her present absurd, one-sided manner, with body unbalanced, limbs cramped, and feet hampered by a great length of enfolding drapery, so long must her life be put in jeopardy every time she places herself in the saddle. It is best to abandon it altogether, till public opinion shall permit her to assume a costume and a posture, that shall be more comfortable for horse and rider, give her a firm, easy seat and a ready control of her

horse, and suffer her, also, to disengage her foot from the stirrup in case any accident makes it necessary.

Since the several modes of out-door exercise that still remain in vogue among women are so few and unsatisfactory, it is a matter of importance that the atmosphere of their houses, wherein their days are mostly spent, should be as pure and healthful as possible. But the want of vitality which has been induced by this lack of vigorous habits leads us to over-heat our rooms in winter, to a degree that is almost unendurable to foreigners; and so accustomed have we become to living in a confined space, that even in summer the four walls of home lose little of their attraction. We Americans shun the outer air and the sunlight as if they would harm us, and in the loveliest weather scarcely feel at ease unless a roof stretches over our heads. It would be better for us if we could learn of the Germans and French to prefer the pleasant garden and the open lawn, and to sit there always when our labors do not prevent. We are told that woman's sphere is at home; and so it is, when she has work to do there that cannot be done elsewhere; but at all other times her sphere is wherever she is healthiest and happiest. If it had been intended that she should spend her whole time in a box, she would have

been furnished with corresponding lungs. God gives no eyes to the fish of the Mammoth Cave, that are never to see light, nor creates any organ incommensurate to its intended use. Woman has as large lungs as man, in proportion to her size; therefore it was not meant for her to abide perpetually behind closed doors. But she has acquired so fixed a taste for this form of slow suicide, that she ought to endeavor by strenuous effort to imbibe a little of that love for the sunshine and the breeze which leads Southern nations to regard their houses as merely necessary evils, places of refuge from the inclemency of the elements, and safe shelters at night.

Thus we see that girls from their childhood have no proper means for unfolding and strengthening their physical natures; and that through all succeeding years their in-door life, their dress, their ordinary avocations and amusements, are directly opposed to the plainest requirements of health. We cannot wonder that the undeveloped forms, the pallid, flabby faces, the languid air, of the prevailing type of young ladyhood are the results of such a system. Rather do we wonder that we meet anywhere the bright, joyous girl, full of vitality and spirit; strong for an adventurous walk over "sands and shores and desert wildernesses," or for a hearty day's work, as the case may de-

mand; ready always for a frolic; keen in sense, clear in mind, warm in heart; capable of falling desperately in love and of falling out again; dressing, on an occasion, with true artistic skill, and outshining all the lifeless damsels within doors by the fresh charm of her talk and the unstudied graces of her manner, yet loving nothing so little as the dull conventionalism of the drawing-room, and the plentiful advice of foppish young brothers and prim maiden aunts. Such girls we know, and they make the joy and radiance of our life. We lament that they are so rare, and that society is ever doing its best to crush out of them every trace of healthy instincts and vigorous life, and to reduce them to the condition of the enfeebled young ladies that meet us on every side, who are all modelled after one wretched pattern, and as much alike as so many peas.

At a summer hotel in one of our country towns our delighted eyes beheld, not long ago, a robust, jubilant girl just in her teens, with the step of a queen and the bearing of a youthful Juno. As a matter of course, this picture of health rejoiced in surmounting stone walls and clambering upon stage-coaches, and was always dashing off from crocheting to join her brothers in wild sports out of doors. She danced of an evening among her listless companions with a light in her eye and a

flush on her cheek; and an Indian girl could not have moved with a more charming grace and freedom. Yet everybody apologized for her, and assured her dismayed mother that these dreadful ways she would certainly outgrow, and that a judicious application of corsets and juvenile parties would soon make her presentable. We hope she continues to wage a relentless warfare with the social powers that be, and that strength will be given her to endure unto the end. Such girls, and such only, will make the strong, efficient, and handsome women that our country so much needs.

We believe this subject to be one of supreme importance; and that a radical change must be made in the training of our girls if we would escape a speedy physical degeneracy as a people. The busy lives our citizens lead would exhaust in time the strongest powers; yet every generation must bring less and less endurance to the eager work. Our intelligence, energy, and productive talents will not save us, so long as they are not directed to this theme. We must comprehend more fully than we now do, that without strong and intelligent mothers it is impossible for a nation to be strong and intelligent; and that not only the mental but the physical education of our girls lies at the basis of the welfare of the State. Greece tried the experiment of raising one half her people

to the highest intellectual and physical culture that her polished civilization could confer, while she kept the other half — the women — in childish ignorance and effeminacy; and the whole fabric of her life, in time, crumbled and fell. Our own country is learning the necessity of educating the minds of its daughters, if only for the benefit of its sons; and the large private bequests recently made for this purpose should cause not only every woman's but every patriot's heart to leap for joy. The need of a more systematic and thorough training of the bodily powers is not yet appreciated, but it is equally urgent, and is destined to receive equal attention in the future.

Girls must no longer be suffered to content themselves with looking on at the sport of their brothers; but it should be made honorable and praiseworthy for them to excel in athletic sports of their own; and schools should confer prizes not only for mental excellence, but also for the strength, endurance, and harmonious growth, which are produced by an enlightened obedience to the laws of health. At the famous Olympian games of Greece, where her young men were developing that splendid physical beauty which still lives as it was copied in her matchless statues, it was death for a woman to be present as a spectator. During all the centuries since then we have advanced only so

far as to suffer the girl to look down benignly from near barouches, wearing the colors of her favorite champions in fluttering ribbons, but striving in vain to comprehend the animated movements before her. It will not take as many more centuries for us to see that she herself must enter the lists; not, perhaps, in any public contests with her brothers, but in some earnest games, tending, like theirs, to strengthen and develop the sinews of the body, and held in equal public esteem.

We need have no fears that she will become unfeminine by such exercise; for this quality, we may suppose, does not depend upon any feebleness of body for its existence, but is an inherent part of her being, which will only be increased, the more fully that being is developed. True womanhood cannot be a thing superinduced by our social customs, to perish when they perish, but must be something inseparable from the character and life. Much that we now call feminine is really unfeminine, since it is a perversion of nature. Only by removing artificial obstructions, abandoning the false training of the present day, and thus allowing nature to assert herself, can we learn what woman was meant to be. And till we see proof to the contrary, we must believe that the development of her physical powers will tend to make her, not only more efficient, but also more gentle

and tender-hearted, and fit her more perfectly to fulfil her mission as the civilizer and beautifier of the world.

Before this can take place, a great change in public opinion must be wrought. One generation is to be made intelligent before the next can be trained aright. Mothers, especially, will need to acquaint themselves with much of which they are now ignorant, since all early education is placed in their hands. They will learn to regard children as, first of all, little animals; and to give them the same intelligent supervision that they bestow upon the dumb creatures dependent upon them for shelter and support. The food given, the dress put on, the plays allowed, in those childish years, should be matters of study and care. The mind can wait a while for its development; but the body must be started right in tastes and habits or it will for ever go wrong, and with it, perhaps, the mental and moral nature also. When mental training is begun, — and begun where we now end, by employing the senses before we do the reason, — we should carry on with it such lively, organized sports as may keep the body in good condition, and render the brain clear and vigorous for its work.

XVIII.

THE REFORMS NEEDED IN DRESS.

NOTHING indicates more strongly the difference in the relative position of the two sexes at the present day than the style of dress adopted by each. Man's attire is simple, compact, and durable; fitted for labor and travel, and consistent with all the requirements of health: that of woman is complicated, voluminous, and burdensome; flimsy in texture, calculated to impede the bodily movements in every part, and scarcely endurable save in a state of indolent repose.

It would appear that this marked difference in their costumes has been gradually developed by the changing circumstances of their lives. The first garments, made of the fig-leaves of Eden, were probably fashioned after one and the same pattern; and still, in many Eastern nations, the flowing, gorgeous vestments of the men resemble in appearance those worn by the women. We know that in Rome citizens enveloped themselves in the heavy folds of a toga that swept the floor like a lady's robe. When fulness of material had

been abandoned in masculine attire, a love of bright colors and of finery still remained; and till within a century, delicate fabrics and brilliant hues have been as dear to the hearts of men as they still remain to those of the other sex. The society of our colonial days had its coats of scarlet velvet, with slashed sleeves, lace collars, and embroidered cuffs; and it gloried in ruffled shirt-frills, diamond knee-buckles, powdered wigs, and beribboned queues, as Copley's portraits will attest.

A coat of mail for the battle-field, an ample toga for the senate, were suited to a race that spent life in waging wars and framing treaties. Doublets of satin and silken hose would do at a time when established orders of gentlemen devoted themselves to the duties of the State, and kept aloof from all the sordid business of life. When trade and the mechanical arts usurped the place formerly held by the excitements of war and the gallantries of courts, and drew into their pursuits all classes, both rich and poor, this display of elegant and cumbrous apparel had to be discarded. At present, Romish priests, Episcopal rectors, and Judges of the Supreme Court, are the only men in our country who encase themselves in flowing draperies; and in the sombre costume of modern days the only hint of gay coloring allowed is that furnished by the bit of silk tied under the chin.

Thus man has eliminated from his dress whatever interferes with activity and ease; and for this purpose almost every trace of the picturesque has been sacrificed, whether it be in shape or color. One or two absurdities he retains; for he still clings to the tall, ill-ventilated hat; and over the chest, which in this climate needs especial protection, the thick broadcloths of coat, vest, and overcoat come to an untimely end in turned-away collars, and leave in their place only a triangle of starched linen to shield the lungs from winter chills. In all other respects his apparel is a most sensible adaptation to the needs of his life. It is loose, allowing free play to the muscles and lungs, and requiring no ligatures nor compression in any part; it is composed of a few pieces, that are easily adjusted, while their weight is made to depend entirely from the shoulders. The material is usually such as will bear exposure to changes of the weather; and, for six months at least, the addition of a hat is all that is needed to complete an outdoor costume. One plain suit for summer and one for winter suffice for common wear; and these are donned day after day, without any attempt at variety, save when an unusual state of the temperature, or the demands of a full-dress occasion, necessitate a change.

Contrast this with the attire assigned to woman.

She needs, commonly, two different suits a day; and these must be varied to meet the nice exactions of social life, and the slightest fluctuations of the weather. Though they are worn but little, the perishable nature of the fabrics, and the constant changes of the mode, require that they should be frequently replaced by new.

The articles which comprise a gentleman's ordinary dress are about eight in number; twenty pieces, at least, go to the clothing of woman; and this, irrespective of all ornaments for neck, arms, wrist, and hair. Of these pieces, none are well adapted to the purposes for which they were intended; so that she is really encased in discomforts from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot. The head-covering, which in man's costume answers for shade to the face as well as for protection, is utterly useless as worn by woman. When it assumes the form of a bonnet, the service it renders is a mystery to beholders; when a hat, it sports, generally, a mere apology for a brim; so that, in either case, a parasol must be added to furnish the necessary screen for the eyes. Thus the work which a hat accomplishes for man, is accomplished for her only by a hat, a parasol, and the constant employment of one arm held upright in a constrained position.

Consider, then, the arrangement of the hair.

Her brother devotes but a moment to smoothing his plain, close-cut locks; but she must suffer her own to attain their utmost length, and then spend an hour, more or less, at her toilette in twining them tightly and elaborately together, adding thereto as many pounds of peasant girls' tresses and ravelled bark as she can afford to purchase. Let any gentleman imagine his own head provided with such an enormous and burdensome attachment; and then let him try to fancy what would be the state of his mind half an hour after he had consented to adopt it. Perhaps first of all, in a list of the miseries in woman's apparel, should be mentioned the compression of the floating ribs under her absurdly shaped dress-waist, by which the lower cells of the lungs are rendered inactive, and consequently diseased, the adjoining organs crowded down and out of their place, and the weight of the skirts forced to depend from the hips and the weakened stomach, instead of hanging freely from the shoulders. Nor is this all; for while our stores furnish to men boots and shoes whose soles and heels are of reasonable width, those provided for women are as unlike the natural shape and posture of the foot as if they had been constructed for the Chinese market. They render a firm, steady gait impossible; and in time they must inevitably produce suffering and deformity.

In view of these manifold evils in woman's dress, it is no wonder that some experienced physicians declare they have ceased to recommend the young ladies under their care to walk out every day, as they are convinced that, with the attire they must wear, it does them more harm than good. Exercise in the open air is, therefore, judiciously proscribed; and so they often sit day after day in rocking-chairs, without exertion of any healthful sort, breathing close air, and only half-breathing that; and who can wonder that women are feeble, and addicted to shattered nerves? What man could survive such a life half as long as they? The term weaker sex is a misnomer; they must be blessed originally with constitutions of iron to enable them to keep alive.

This style of dress, which has prevailed for centuries, not only produces disease in those who wear it, but its result must be to transmit disease and enervated powers to the men and women who succeed them. It is not the sins of the fathers alone that are visited upon the third and fourth generation; the sins of the mothers entail a far surer and more enduring heritage of woe. If women of the present are weak-bodied and weak-minded, the men of the future must inevitably be weak-bodied and weak-minded also.

It is well, then, to inquire the cause of this per-

sistent adherence to injurious fashions, by which so many evils are wrought. Is it because woman has a fancy for voluntary tortures, and believes that the more secret pain she inflicts upon herself, in the way of distorted ribs, squeezed liver, pinched feet, and fettered arms, the better it will be for her in the world to come; like Franciscan friars, turning up a contemptuous nose at all the delights of this life that she may be thought worthy of another? Or does she subject herself to this misery out of mere desperation, convinced by tender sympathizers of the Michelet order that suffering is her appointed lot, that she can look upon herself as, at best, but an exquisite physical failure, a piece of machinery so wondrously fine that it must for ever go wrong, and that, therefore, a few additional agonies, more or less, can be of little account? But this theory she never does accept; it wages war directly upon her belief in the power, wisdom and benevolence of her Creator, and that belief she must ever retain. Things may be all awry, but God is certainly not to blame. Neither does she appear to herself to have chosen this mischievous attire; the world seems rather to have banded together in a conspiracy against her before she was born; and it proves powerful enough to dictate the terms on which it will tolerate her existence. She adopts the fashions it holds out to

her without thought of protest, for her very food and raiment are dependent on its favor. This hourly inconvenience is not courted in order to gain heaven, but is accepted in order to secure a tolerable life upon earth.

In most cases she is heedless or ignorant that it is any thing more than temporary inconvenience, which she thus accepts. From her imperfect education, she is too often incapable of tracing the connection between the restrictions of her dress and the permanent physical evils of her life. And she has never been taught to look with proper condemnation upon practices which are endangering the welfare, not merely of this generation, but of all posterity.

But bad as the dress of the present day may seem, let us not forget that it has adopted a few encouraging reforms during the past ten years. Water-proof cloaks and rubber boots have rendered it possible to venture abroad in inclement weather; and whatever may be said against our deformities in shoes, they are an improvement upon the thin paper soles which once sent so many girls to untimely graves. Metal hoops are a light substitute for the masses of floating cloth which they succeeded; and the circumference of the crinoline has been diminished one half, and we will hope that the reduction is permanent. Fashions are less rigorous,

since they offer for individual choice a greater variety of makes and patterns; and when one sensible style, like the small sacque and close sleeve, has been received with favor, it is retained for years. These are only straws, but they show the wind to be setting in the right direction.

No change, however, begins in importance with the short walking-skirt. This has done more for the physical regeneration of women than all the hygienic lectures and doctor's pills that were ever administered. Who does not remember with horror the woful days when we went about the world clutching wildly at escaping draperies, that would droop and draggle behind, through mire and dust, though we kept both hands imprisoned at the work, and both eyes cast down to our boot-toes in careful picking of the way? Now, we sigh no more for a gallant Sir Walter Raleigh, with his plush cloak, at every turn in the road; for we have found that to have thick soles to our boots and a skirt-hem that clears the ground, is better than to depend upon another's courtesies.

The persistent attempts of our mantuamakers to revive the use of trailing skirts for the street find favor with none but the giddy and weak-minded, to whom every imported fashion-plate is an object too sacred for criticism or change. Sensible women still insist upon taking their promenades

without dragging behind them yards of dusty, frayed dry-goods, that serve, day after day, to sweep the filthy pavements for all that come after. And, indeed, if women are to be regarded as any thing better than lay figures, made only to be draped for picturesque effects, it would puzzle any one to discover where those unclean, expensive, hampering attachments are not out of place. For flying angels in fair weather, as they are portrayed in such pictures as the Burial of St. Catharine, they may be appropriate and becoming; but for any being that has to touch this earth in ordinary locomotion, they are an unmitigated nuisance. We assign them to parties and ball-rooms; yet in any such crowd they are an annoyance and an insult to whomsoever approaches them; and they can become nothing but flying whirlwinds and entangling snares in the circling mazes of the dance. Worn on horseback, they are dangerous to life; since in any accident by which a lady is thrown, they may catch in the saddle or stirrup, and human aid will then be powerless to free her from the frightened steed. Should the majority of women, now that they have learned the comfort of short dresses, ever go back, of their own free will, to this enslaving and disgusting fashion, we can blame no one for giving them over as by nature an inferior and subject race; and strong as our faith

remains in their undeveloped powers, we shall be ready, at that spectacle, to pardon John Chinaman when he assures our missionaries that his sisters have no souls to save. Certainly they will prove themselves unworthy to inhabit a land for whose discovery a woman sold her precious jewels, — that noble woman, without whose sagacious, queenly aid, the Genoese navigator, repulsed as he was from all kingly courts, might have left his dreams unverified, and this continent be still lying, unvisited and unknown, in the bosom of the western deep.

During one of Mr. Fletcher's early visits to Brazil, he was surprised to see the fine ladies about him attired in heavy furs, in the midst of fierce summer heats; but light broke upon his mind when he learned that their fashion-books came direct from Paris, and that in those revered pages it was declared to be the thing to wear sable capes and chinchilla trimmings from December to March. That they happened to reside south of the equator seemed to these faithful votaries no sufficient reason for setting at defiance the mandates of the French court. Scarcely less absurd is the abject copying of the styles of a foreign aristocracy by the women of our own land. Because queens and duchesses sweep along trains of satin and velvet, that "lie floating many a rood" over the tessellated floors of regal drawing-rooms, therefore every shop-

girl and house-maid in America must work her finger-ends off to obtain some imitation of those fabrics, cut after the very patterns sent from their modistes. Adaptation to work is never considered. It would seem that in devising her attire each one dreamt she dwelt in marble halls, and forgot that dawdling about the spaces of a palace is one thing, and earning board and clothing at four dollars a week, and lodging in the attic, is quite another.

In all respects our present dress is suited only to an indolent, sofa-lounging life, and is but the modified descendant of that worn in the harems of the East. The loose draperies have been pinched and tightened just where the vital organs could be impeded; and wherever the step and motion could be clogged they have been made more wide and free; and to this product of past idleness and present inconvenience we cling as if the good of the world depended upon its retention. It is high time that earnest and active women forsook the mischievous models of foreign palaces, and set about devising for themselves a costume that may be simple, durable, and healthful; that shall cover the figure with easy folds, where it is now deformed by tightened bands; that shall strive to be graceful and artistic, yet retain flowing lines only so far as they are consistent with the free

movement essential to health. But till such a costume is adopted, let no one really desirous of improvement in this respect consider that tight-lacing, high heels, and wafer hats, that useless and excessive furbelows, and the heathenish baubles of chains, bracelets, and ear-rings, are at all essential to a well-dressed woman, tried by the best standard of these present days.

Since mothers begin to show some gleams of sense in clothing young children, so that we see warm leggings buttoned over the little limbs that were once left bare in winter weather, the ligatures called garters discarded, and high necks and long sleeves covering the tender neck and arms, we may hope that after a few more years of torture they may consent to vary their own attire for the better, and to emerge, at length, from that state of chronic invalidism which is now their curse.

Every woman knows that the evils of which we speak are not exaggerated; and many indications denote that under this apparent subserviency to wicked fashions there is a strong desire for something better. Certain it is that women of sense are everywhere anxious that a radical change may be made. Such discontent culminated, a few years ago, in the desperate attempt to introduce the Bloomer costume, which, despite its oddity and ungraceful look, was welcomed secretly by thou-

sands, who beheld in it a possible deliverance from the burdensome habiliments of the past. They saw it hooted out of existence with a sincere pang; for, though it might not be all they wished, any thing, however ugly, was an improvement upon what they had had. But the lack of beauty was not its fatal defect: it appeared as the work of an American woman, instead of heralding itself as a passing fancy of the *demi-monde* of Paris; and this was sufficient to condemn it in the eyes of the sex. Women have become so enslaved to recognized authorities that the question with them has never been, Is the fashion sensible? but, Who wears it? they never ask, What it is that is said? but, Who says it? Yet, till some combined action is taken by women in this matter of dress, it will remain next to impossible for any individual to secure for herself a material increase of comfort, since all manufacturers, dressmakers, and tradesmen are naturally in league to enforce submission to the reigning modes.

In this work of reform, it is idle to wait for the encouragement and sanction of men, for it will never be given. While they admit all the evils we enumerate, and bewail them most lustily, they will insist that no sister or friend of theirs shall attempt the change. Considering how recently they themselves have cast off the elaborate ele-

gancies once thought essential to a well-dressed gentleman, it is amusing to hear their vehement protests against any proposed modifications of the feminine garb. When they found their own attire impracticable, they asked no permission from the other sex, but went straightway to work to devise another. What did it matter to them that the new raiment was stiff and unlovely in the eyes of women? We have to suffer from the old and to wear the new, said they, therefore we will have it to our minds. Sitting now at ease in plain, close-fitting garments, they turn to their cloth-enveloped sisters, who are wishing under their breath to be delivered from this bondage, and exclaim: Do not, in Beauty's name, think of curtailing the borders of your phylacteries, for the sight of flowing contours is pleasing to our eyes; and let us ever behold your coils of silky tresses, your slender waists girded to the fragility that we find so charming, your cramped feet balanced so daintily on high heels, your fair complexions shaded from the sun. If you cannot breathe, if your ankles ache, and your hands are weary with festooning floating silks above ball-room floors, — why, we really are sorry that you should suffer so, but then the proprieties must be observed, if you die for it. To attempt a reform in such matters would be to shock us inexpressibly; and we assure

you we wish you to continue as you are. Our mission it is to be comfortable, yours is to be beautiful; and to you it now remains to preserve the picturesque in life, since we have found ourselves wholly unable to bear its inconveniences.

That women, by the circumstances of their position, are now obliged to please the opposite sex, we will admit; but that they were meant to be any more beautiful than man we deny. Nature intended men to be as pleasing in the eyes of women, as women can possibly be to them; and a handsome, shapely youth is, or ought to be, as much admired by the one sex, as a pretty, graceful girl is by the other.

The notion that to woman especially belongs the duty of making herself attractive in appearance, would seem to have no sanction from analogy in nature. Judging by the birds and savage tribes, we should fancy it to be just the other way. It is always the male birds who possess the beautiful plumage, and who take the most pains to oil and adorn themselves. To the peacock is given the regal train of lustrous feathers, with its hundred splendid eyes; while his sober wife has not a trace of gleaming gold in her whole attire. It is Robert of Lincoln who flashes betwixt the apple-trees in a gay suit of yellow and black, while Mrs. Robert sits demurely on the nest in the plainest of garbs.

Among savage tribes, it is not the squaws who are arrayed in tall feather crowns, with painted cheeks, fringed leggings, and ornamented blankets; and they, poor things, find little chance in life for such displays. We once saw the daughter of an Indian chief, who, since her father's death, had acted as ruler over her scattered and enfeebled race, receiving the government supplies and distributing them with her own hands; but this female chief presented a sorry picture, with her dingy blanket trailing over calico skirts, and her hair falling unkempt about her shoulders. She was not in full dress, to be sure, but her neighbors had never seen her in gorgeous array; and we doubt if she had in her whole wardrobe any such braveries and barbaric splendors as Red Cloud and Little Raven have of late been displaying at the home of their Great Father. Thus, the favorite theory that finery and trinkets are naturally most pleasing and most appropriate to women, falls to the ground.

The ornaments now worn by man are such as interfere with neither freedom nor health, and they have some ostensible purpose to effect; let it be so with the ornaments of woman; let her make her dress a means, and not an end, a convenience, and not a pursuit; and, leaving gewgaws to children and savages, set to work to substitute ease and simplicity for discomfort and multitudinous details.

But while in the shape and number of woman's different articles of apparel a reform is most obviously needed, something easier should be possible, also, in her mode of obtaining them. The tailor and the mantuamaker are the representatives of two systems, as different in their simplicity and convenience as the garments which they manufacture. Compare the time which a woman must give to the preparation of her clothing with that required from the masculine world. When a gentleman wishes a new suit, he finds cloth, trimmings and maker at the same store; and he visits that but once for the purpose of giving his orders. No perplexing counsels are held as to the cut of the sleeves, the goring of the skirt, or the trimming of the collar; the measures are quickly taken, and a few words comprise all directions that are needed. Should the articles, when sent home, prove a misfit, they can be returned upon the tailor's hands and another trial made, without risk to the customer.

A lady must buy her goods at one store; take them off to the mantuamaker; decide with her as to the shaping of a dozen different parts, with a chaos of the last fashion-plates spread out before her, considering meanwhile which pattern is likely to be becoming, and, if she be of an economical turn, which will come out of the cloth, which will

admit thereafter of alteration, and which is most antipodal to the styles of the past season and especially to those of her neighbors. These vital points settled, she proceeds to beat about the streets for a whole afternoon in search of silks, gimps and buttons of the precise shade; for this laborious course is necessary if she would not pay her workwoman treble their value. Most ladies have learned by sad experience that it is ruinous to give artistic dressmakers unlimited license concerning costly materials and the indeterminate values of plaitings and ruches. These trimmings delivered, other calls must be made upon the divinity who shapes her ends, in order to try on the growing marvels during their successive stages. When they are at length completed, if the divinity is found to have given her particular fits, she is blest, and thanks the gods; but if her garments are hopeless failures, she can look for no redress. The material was hers, and so now are all its changes and additions.

There is one other course for a lady to pursue; and that is, to take an itinerant dressmaker home, and keep her in watchful presence during the whole fabrication, while the mistress attends as usual to servants, dinners, children and guests; as if a gentleman should bring his tailor with him into his counting-room, and keep an eye on his

seams and button-holes while consigning goods to the South-west and bargaining for expected cargoes. When to these preparatory labors a woman must add the sewing of her own garments, she is indeed afflicted, for the stitches to be set in modern array are infinite in their number. But with some such troublous experiences is every fresh costume ushered into the world.

There are certain indications that a more simple, time-saving course is already inaugurated. We have observed with pleasure, during the past few years, the opening of stores for the sale of many articles of lady's clothing which heretofore had to be laboriously made at home; and now garments of every variety can be obtained, requiring but slight finishing at the hands of the wearer. The department of dressmaking is also added to many of our larger dry-goods stores; so that we seem really approaching those simple arrangements by which gentlemen have so long been able to procure their attire. That division of labor which man finds so profitable will be adopted by woman, as soon as her own time becomes more valuable than the wages a seamstress would receive. As she no longer weaves her cloth from the wool which her own hands have cleansed and carded and spun, but finds herself better served with the products of the manufacturer's loom, so in coming

days she will cease to fashion for herself, like the members of primitive communities, every different article that she may need. These will be best obtained from those who make their production a specialty; and thus her own time can be wholly given to one congenial pursuit.

When all the petty and perplexing labors attendant upon this preparation of her wardrobe shall be taken out of her days, what thought and leisure it will give for other and higher interests! At present her life is spent in sorting ribbons and selecting lace; and as much time is devoted to matching a peculiar shade of olive-green as would go to the writing of an epic upon Jerusalem. Hereafter, a few trained and gifted tastes shall devise the adornments of the world; and the general artistic perceptions of women, which, as Mr. Mill says, now find expression only in the variations of home-made apparel, embodying poems and romances in flimsy silks and muslins, will be tempted to range into the higher walks of literature and art. The world may be afflicted, in consequence, with a greater quantity of daubs and doggerel; but if it gains thereby healthier, happier, and more thoughtful women, it should gladly furnish garrets and obscure corners for their work.

XIX.

GRANDMOTHERS' HOUSES.

IN our new and ever-changing society, the women of the past generation bear little resemblance to those whose virtues and follies occupy us to-day. Representatives of this elder time still linger among us, bringing down into our hurried, aspiring age the contrast of serene and unambitious lives gliding peacefully to their close. We, their grandchildren, love full well the new homes we have made; but with our wider outlook, and the hold we have taken upon the varied thoughts and interests of the great world beyond our doors, we look back with a feeling that is more envy than wonder upon the simple labors for kith and kin that filled and satisfied their days. Can the women about us, we query, ever become such blessed comforting angels to their children's children, in the old age that is to come?

A grandmother, when established in one of our modern households, and dispensing kind favors from her nook by the fireside, may be a most agreeable object to look upon, and a source of delight

to all about her; but it is not thus that our ideal grandmother exists. In the homes of her children, however honored she may be, she has lost, in a measure, her dignity and her independence, and obeys where she has been wont to direct. In order that she may be living there, it must have happened that the little world over which she was once supreme has passed away for ever. All that remains of it are the sweet, sad memories that employ her thoughts whenever the childish prattle about her is still, and the gayeties of society have drawn away for an evening the companions of her daily life.

The grandmother of our fancy lives still in the old homestead; and the sceptre of its ownership and dominion has never yet passed from her hands. There her children were born, and there they grew to manhood and womanhood; departing at length to newer homes, while she continues the guardian of this, cherishing every relic of the past, and ready to welcome back to the old nest any of her brood who may choose to return. You may find her house in any of our older New England towns;—a square, roomy mansion, two stories in height and of substantial build; set high upon a swell of rising ground, with a fenced flower-garden, or a slope of worn grass, between it and the road. Its broad front faces the south, whatever direction the high-

way may take; so that it often seems to be turning a cold shoulder to passers-by in some old, inappeasable huff. But this angular attitude secures plenty of sunshine; and from early morning to late afternoon the bright flood pours through tiny window-panes upon the yellow paint of the kitchen floor, and across the home-made hit-or-miss carpet that adorns the sitting-room.

Every thing about the house, whether within or without, savors of the past, and wears a charm that no new upholstery nor modern comforts can give. How fair to our eyes looks the ancient garden in summer-time, as we swing back the little gate and pass up, through lines of hollyhocks and snowdrops, to the broad stone step before the door! There waves a clump of ribbon-grass that has grown in the same spot ever since the days when we plucked it to trim the hats of our dolls; and the small, yellow Scotch roses, the polyanthus and London-pride spring as fresh as ever from the old roots. Morning-glories, pink and blue, climb beside the window-blinds; and a venerable honeysuckle swings its yellow trumpets from a post of the old stoop. How many pretty maidens have broken its sweet sprays to stick in their bodices in the days gone by! how many playful lovers have offered them to their sweethearts, as they were departing from the door! And still its gnarled stalks send

out tender shoots and fragrant blossoms for a new generation of visitors, as if the past and the present were all alike to them.

Within, the hall is quiet and forsaken; and the tall, straight clock ticking heavily in the corner appears the only inhabitant of the stillness. But there are times, even now, when a bevy of rosy-faced children make it gay with laughter, as they come sliding down the steep, polished rail of its winding staircase; and one may sometimes hear there to-day the soft opening of chamber-doors above, and the rustle of ample dresses sweeping down against twisted balusters to the parlor below. Occasionally, at midsummer, the traveller glances up to behold a group of young faces rising in tiers upon the lower stairs, as they sit looking out through the open door to the garden, the greenery, and the sky; but such occurrences are rare. For the most part, in the long, still days, it is only grandmother who glides noiselessly up and down in her trim, low slippers and scant skirts; making sure that the window-blinds are hasped together, and that no flies venture to pass the fringes of the curtains.

We know well the interior that will meet our gaze when we open the door of the large, closed parlor, and stand looking in from the threshold. It is barely light enough there to distinguish the pat-

tern of the faded carpet, woven with a border that runs straight around the room and bends in to no window recesses; but we remember it clearly, as we do that of the barbarous, large-figured papering, whose scrolls and garlands wheel about from side to side over a groundwork of shaded blue. By the chimney-piece, tall steel tongs flash out lustrously bright; and the rims of the picture-frames gleam in the darkness. In the narrow, bevel-edged mirror are reflected the towering astral lamp and the family Bible, resting in state upon the doubled top of the card-table beneath. There is also a great mahogany dining-table, heavy and polished, with folded leaves so broad that they almost hide its carved claw-feet. The mantel is long and high; and above it hang squares of silk embroidery, where the crimson petals of the roses and the purple lips of the pansies are blanched to one sameness of yellowish white. There, too, appears a small silhouette, upon which our great grandfather's profile is preserved cut in solid blackness, with the sharp contour of his nose and the curling ends of his wig standing forth as if outlined by Paul Kenowka, and serving to portray our respected ancestor as a cadaverous negro of the blackest dye. A stitched sampler on the opposite wall marshals in a row the names of all our aunts and uncles, apparently rehearsing for the family tombstone; and

our mother's name in pale silk is signed at the foot, "ætat 16." That she could ever have been sixteen seemed not more wonderful to our childish fancy than that, in the very face of the marigolds and pinks, the cows and the farm-houses around her, she should have wilfully fashioned such impossible flowers, animals, and dwellings as those which meander through its border. A couple of peacock feathers are stuck above this genealogical record; and the same ornaments serve to beautify the one remaining picture of the room. This represents a tall, white tablet, with the inscription "Sacred to the memory of" visible across the top. At the side of this tablet leans a composed female in black attire, holding to her right eye one corner of a voluminous handkerchief, while the other trails to the ground at her feet. The weeping-willow, arching close above her head, does not touch her with one of its leaves; and all its branches grow in a singular manner, either to the right or left, and in parallel lines. But however faulty these objects might appear as works of art, they are beyond criticism as the products of beloved fingers, and are enshrined in a thousand sweet associations. The smooth, speckless carpet, the wrought, faded footstools, the high-backed chairs, the antique tables, and the ornamented walls, make the whole room seem to us a cherished pict-

ure which no modern touches could improve. It is a realm sacred to family weddings, Thanksgiving dinners, and formal gatherings, and is never profaned by more familiar merriment.

In the sitting-room, on the other side of the hall, the furniture is of more recent make; and the cheery sunlight pouring into it falls upon pots of bergamot, house-leeks and tea-roses, on a little stand. Here the arm-chairs have feather cushions, and backs of wooden rods so straight and high that they defy chignons and panniers to find comfort within them. On the walls we may behold a fac-simile of the Declaration of Independence, with all the specimens of chirography that figured beneath it, from John Hancock's dashing curves to Stephen Hopkins's quavering lines; and beside it, perhaps, a map of the United States, depicting the country west of the Mississippi as a blank, unexplored waste.

In the smaller, less frequented rooms, there are rows of glass tumblers set upon the window-sashes, filled, as we surmise, with luscious jellies; each with its cap of white paper tightly drawn, and no hint of leathery mould crinkling upon the surface within. The pantry door is half open, and upon the lower shelves we behold the stone jars that enshrine grandmother's preserves, — rich, purple-hearted damsons, strings of tart barberries,

and neat little crab-apples on their slender stems. There, too, are the pickles, such pickles as only grandmother makes,—great, globular mangoes, that show, when cut open, imprisoned stores of tiny onions, baby cucumbers, allspice, mustard-seed and horse-radish; all served up within the pulpy rind of a melon, and pickled crisp and hard.

In the kitchen, the wide, open fireplace holds now a patent cooking-stove, which projects glumly from its empty space; but we can recall the time when great back-logs dozed there in a fervid serenity, while smaller sticks broke and crackled before them, and high over the flames a line of pots and kettles swung from the crane, on long bent hooks. It was a delight in those days to sit near the chimney before the candles were lighted, and see the shine of the great fire playing over the burnished tops of the andirons, and converting the tin pans standing in the opposite dresser into so many flashing suns. And what a glowing cave of inapproachable heat seemed the brick oven beside it, on those Saturday mornings when, with its fierce breath singeing our cheeks, we watched long shovels bringing out the live coals that were bedded within, and then tenderly consigning to its swept floor a freight of bean-pots, loaves of brown bread, pan-dowdies and mince and pumpkin pies. Such a grand baking-festival in the brick oven

takes place there now only once a year, when grandmother makes ready the Thanksgiving feast for her returning family. But no lack of eatables is ever known in her capacious pantry, since the first essential to human happiness in the old New England mansion is that there should be at all hours plenty to eat and to drink.

No part of the old homestead becomes a source of so much curiosity to eager-eyed grandchildren as the closets; for these seem the repositories of treasures too sacred to be touched by profane fingers or exposed to the common gaze. Especially interesting are the small, quaint cupboards perched high in the corners of the room, beyond the reach of little visitors, even though they stand tiptoe on the rush-bottomed chairs beneath them. The most their cell-like cavities reveal, when the door chances to swing back, is an array of ancient, broken-nosed teapots, wherein are stored choice garden-seeds for next year's planting and hoards of the caraway seed which makes delicious the leaf-shaped sugar cakes that grandmother dispenses for lunch. What greater marvels and mysteries lie hidden behind, in those dark recesses, the childish fancy can but vaguely conjecture, and may never hope to behold.

But for fascination and dimly revealed splendors, nothing can equal the great square parlor-closet.

Broad shelves, running around its three sides, are resplendent with all the fine dishes,—the china, the glass and the silver, that the house contains. These figure upon the board only on grand occasions, and never if the smaller grandchildren are privileged to sit beside it. We remember the door as ajar on festal mornings, when some unusual dinner was in progress; and then the claw-footed mahogany table stood with wings full-spread in the centre of the long parlor, and the busy opening of doors let in wafts of warm, appetizing odors from the kitchen. The groups of little people who hovered in clean aprons about the window-seats were never too far gone in their quiet games to note these spicy heralds of a coming feast. And they did not fail, at such times, to gaze reverently from a distance at the long-hoarded treasures of the great closet,—treasures which might appear as frail and perishable as snow-flakes, but which had been objects of equal wonder to their mothers, when they, too, trotted about in their pinafores. Servant girls—those modern instruments of destruction—have no place in the grandmother's household, save when sickness forces her to deliver herself and her belongings into the hands of the enemy.

Ranged along those upper shelves we can still behold the service of painted china that was

brought from London, as we had heard, when grandmother was a bride: and that, certainly, was ages ago; for memory fails to recall a time when she did not wear close lace caps tied under her chin, and smooth puffs of false hair above her wrinkled forehead. In our childhood this service appeared the most sacred thing of all, for none of its pieces, to our knowledge, had ever been moved from their place. But so often had we scanned the plates, as they stood on their edges against the wall, and the straight little coffee-mugs before them, that the landscapes upon them appeared familiar, though no two of them were alike. Then the teacups, just big enough for the fairies, — surely no mortal ever slaked his thirst out of such tiny vessels; or, if he did, he must have followed Dr. Johnson's example, and asked the patient hostess for his fortieth cup. They were evidently intended for church tea-drinkings, where precise maiden ladies should sit opposite the young minister, and lift them mincingly by the tips of the long handles, crooking out the little finger the while, and sipping daintily, as one Hogarth would have delighted to paint them.

Below this treasured collection we look upon less dreadful shapes; for here is the second-best china-set, the one that was wont to crown the table when honored visitors had consented to stay to

supper. Many a time and oft have we stood trembling in our best shoes, as we wiped its transparent saucers after the ceremony was over, holding our breath lest some evil spirit should send one of them spinning from our fingers and twirling with a crash upon the floor. Such a catastrophe we felt could only usher in a wild and general upheaval of the universe; but however grievous may have been our youthful sins, so dire a misfortune was never visited upon our heads. There every piece appears to-day as fair and perfect as ever, with soft, red figures upon a background of creamy white; and still around the snowy edges of plate and saucer race the crimson hounds, followed by crimson huntsmen on their crimson horses, all wild and eager with the chase; and there, like the gay procession on Keat's Grecian urn, they shall rush and leap and bay behind the flying game, till the careless fingers of great-grandchildren put an end to their tireless sports.

Amid straight glass tumblers and bulging cream-pitchers are stacked long-legged sugar-tongs, and the best teaspoons, slim and long in the handles and very shallow in the bowls. Their plain surfaces are roughened at the end by an initial letter in old English text; or by a tiny sheaf of wheat, with every kernel cut clear and lustrous, and a gleaming sickle stuck through the band.

Nor is this all that the wonderful closet contains. On the topmost shelf are visible the remnants of other sets of precious dishes, few in number and ungainly in design. They comprise piles of wafer-like saucers and broad fruit-plates, which once held places of honor among their brethren on the shelves of corner beaufets, but have now become the heir-looms of extinct families of relatives, from whom they descended in their fragmentary glory. Among them sits the great, clumsy pitcher with a coat-of-arms on one side, and the name of some long-departed ancestor on the other, beneath its rim of tarnished gold. The sight of it recalls to us many a Christmas and Thanksgiving dinner, when grandfather's new cider was poured sparkling from its ancient nose. There, too, perhaps, is a punch-bowl, old and hideous enough to have come over in that capacious vessel, the Mayflower, if her sober company of voyagers suffered such things in their midst. Whether they did or not, another generation receiving the punch bowl, will, no doubt, assert this to be a veritable fact. "Everything unknown passes in time for the magnificent and the historical," — if we may translate Tacitus a little more freely than we dared to do in our school days. Behind this motley throng show the tips of heart-shaped feather fans, strange in make and brilliant in coloring. Where they came from

we are at a loss to imagine, but somehow they always suggested Africa and the Queen of Sheba to our childish fancy. If grandmother would only sit down with us before this enticing closet on some long afternoon, and tell us all about its hoarded contents, even though she had to invent some fine stories to satisfy our desires! But this she never does; and so busy and so thoughtful does she always seem, that we do not question her concerning them. And thus the great closet remains to us, even in later life, a storehouse of relics whose unwritten history is that of the family to which they belong.

Besides the Bible and the almanac, there are few books to be found in the old house. Upon high chests of drawers are piled some dingy volumes in leather bindings, which we cannot believe any body ever loved to read, for they are the sermons of forgotten divines, and their pages are full of dreadful anathemas and death-warnings. On other musty title-pages, in ancient lettering, we read "Baxter's Call to the Unconverted," "The Saints' Rest" and "Pollock's Course of Time." A New England Primer, in blue paper covers, looks a little more attractive, with its short rhymes and tiny pictures, but we pity those who had to learn the dreary catechism at the close. There is an old bookcase standing in the parlor; and from

its shelves we extract a volume or two of the "Spectator," and sometimes take down a Latin Dictionary with a school-boy's name scrawled across the fly-leaf, a name that belongs now to a gray-headed man who has forgotten that he ever thumbed its leaves. Perhaps the dear old grandfather hobbled along beside us, as we swung back the glass doors lined with their faded green silk, and opening a volume of Burns recited verse after verse, with a brightening twinkle in his eye. But we needed no one to point out to us the corner where reposed those entrancing novels, few, and of the finest print, "Rasselas" and "The Saracen," "The Children of the Abbey," and "The Romance of the Forest." On many a winter evening have we pored over them, in those early days when lonely, haunted houses, trap-doors and underground passages, immaculate heroes and unmitigated devils, were the indispensable ingredients of a charming book.

Such are the contents of the lower floor. But the winding staircase leads up to still chambers, even more quaint and full of memories than the rooms below. Here are high-posted bedsteads, with dark chintz hangings depending from their upper rods; and over the great feather cushions beneath, droop patchwork quilts and full white valances to the well-worn carpet. And here

towers a sick-chair with high, padded sides, within which nobody knows how many ailing people have leaned their weary heads. Oval light-stands have their tops turned up vertically in the corners; and a toilet-table, draped in white dimity from head to foot, stands like a snowy altar between the windows. The tarnished frame of the mirror hanging over it runs up high above the glass, and encloses the picture of a spread eagle, with ribbons fluttering from his beak. A tall chest of drawers shines resplendent with brass handles; and well do we know how frightfully these can rattle when a small child stands on tiptoe before them, and strives to open the upper drawer just wide enough to get a peep at the treasures within, — at the wide capes of embroidered muslin, the little skull-caps of wrought cambric once fitted to babies' heads, the gauze ribbons, the fine needle-books, and the jet pins enshrining locks of hair.

Brass candlesticks adorn the mantel in these front chambers; brass andirons are crossed before the fireboard; and a pair of bellows and a feather fan hang from a brass knob beside them. Home-made-mats spread their ungainly patterns near the fireplace, and circles of braided rugs repose before the doors. The windows are bowery and inaccessible with full curtains, that float down from a rounded cornice and fall over a glass handle at the

side, so as to hide all but a corner of the lowest pane. White chairs, with their garlands of painted roses, are set before them in opposing couples; and no one moves them aside to get a glimpse of the world without, even though blossoming apple-boughs tap at the windows, and bobolinks warble their gay matins amid the leaves.

Above the chambers is a wide, open garret, where we love to loiter when grandmother sends us for sprigs of the penny-royal and other savory herbs that hang in bundles from the massive oak beams. We stay to enact a scene from *Martha* at the old spinning-wheel, or to twirl out imaginary flax, like Gretchen, from the smaller wheel beside it, and then look to see how the flowers are getting along that we laid in books within the cheese-presses. Mounting to the swinging seat in the great silent loom, we drive the wooden shuttle between the warp and woof that remain, and shake the bars across with a great clatter, trying to fancy the days when these looms wove the blue counterpanes and woollen blankets that fill long chests in the upper entries, as also the linen table-cloths and checked flannel aprons that still survive among newer stores of modern manufacture. Here is the saddle on which grandmother, as she has told us, rode to tea-parties when she was a dashing girl; old lanterns that have lighted dark roads for weary

travellers now for ever at rest; warming-pans released from further duty; and the tin foot-stoves once taken to meeting filled with live coals, so that the pew-floor might not be intolerable during the long sermon and the prayers. A writing-desk preserves the copy-books of aunts and uncles, with even more blots and worse pothooks on their pages than were ever seen on our own; a composition of some ancestral lady on Contentment; and a drawing in which the space between two tree-boles makes a full-length portrait of Napoleon, crossed arms, cocked hat, and all. A grace-hoop dangles its circle of faded ribbons from a beam, and what hours of childish merriment it recalls! We see again the bright-eyed, handsome cousin who used to send it flying back with such dexterous strokes, as we stood playing under the apple-trees. The house is the same as then, but the handsome cousin never comes back to it now, for he lies in a soldier's grave far away; and she who laughed with him in those merry days sits down upon the dusty stairs alone, and weeps a little spasm of sudden tears.

Pleasant as the old house looks from within, it seems pleasanter still when we survey the world without from its open doorways. On the low sill of that back door how often have we sat shelling peas in our pinafores, while the bees buzzed around the

clover-heads at our feet, and swarms of tipsy insects reeled across the white umbels of the caraway-tops. Under the cinnamon rose-bush beside us a frisky kitten lay in wait; dashing out with upturned paw whenever a butterfly sailed across her nose, or a swallow swooped to the grass in his wheeling flight. It mattered nothing to her that the butterfly had doubled on her airy track, and that the swallow was up again in mid-heaven, before she realized that they had gone; she settled her white breast and tipped her head again for the next encounter, whatever it might be. It mattered as little to us that the water was already bubbling in the pot upon the stove behind us, while most of the peas lay snugly housed in their pods. We thought it no shame to surrender them to swifter fingers, as we strolled over to the tall well-sweep opposite, and gazed down the hollow cylinder of stones beneath, where pale ferns were waving from the damp clefts and fine mosses dripped with diamond drops. Far below, from the untroubled depth, a small face looked up to us, a face rounder and rosier than we shall ever see there again; but a plunge of the bucket broke the still mirror, and with much tugging we brought up a cool draught to rest upon the curb.

What a world of delight seemed to stretch out from that doorway! Lopped and gnarled old apple-

trees shaded all the grass; and we knew the fruit that every one of those mossy patriarchs bore,—the Porters, the Pound-sweets, the Baldwins, the Russets and Greenings, and the Blue Pearmains. By the stone wall, where the Lombardy poplar lifted its decaying branches, grew rows of currant-bushes, and choke-cherries that hung their puckery clusters just beyond our reach.

Then there was the barn, across whose dark interior slanted bright streaks of light, from the cracks to the edges of the full mows, while gleaming particles of dust danced within their lines. Through the open door swallows darted in, chattering overhead; and we heard the plethoric cooing of the doves, as they strutted on their high shelves outside. If a spirit of adventure seized us, we climbed the higher lofts for hens' eggs, and came down with hayseed powdering our hair and an apron carefully held in one hand, while the other clung fiercely to the rounds of the straight ladders.

When we return now to the dear old mansion, we seem, not only to have stepped back into a past age, but to have reached a place where Time has no wings upon his hour-glass, and where the sands flow down without noise or apparent motion. In the hurry and excitement of our city homes, the morning seems scarcely begun before we find that it is night; but here the full hours glide along

slowly and silently, rounding toward the evening with a lingering, unexpectant grace. As in the land of the lotos-eaters, it seems to be "always afternoon;" and in such "infinite leisure" the brain cools itself, the heart-throbs grow gentler, and we learn to breathe the calm elixir of the gods. The breakfast at daybreak, the dinner at midday, the early supper for all dwellers in house and barn, — and the last glow of the sunset, burning out behind the black rim of western woods, brings us to the dark, still hours before bedtime. Then we watch grandmother's glancing knitting-needles, as they travel in and out around the stocking of blue yarn that is growing every moment under her fingers; and we set ourselves to studying "The Farmers' Almanac, by Robert B. Thomas," which hangs beside the mantel. Therein we read great news about the coming eclipses and the conjunctions of the planets; and find ourselves curious to discover at what time the moon rises to-night, and whether her ladyship will show us a face full-orbed, or a narrow crescent. We stand at the windows to greet her as she crowns the hill-top in the next field; and then we hear, over the still country-side, the rattle of a distant wagon jolting homeward from town, and the bark of a dog or a fox in some neighboring wood. The wide sky sparkles with constellations; and straight down

towards the north shoots a falling star. We look for the little band of the Pleiades, Cassiopeia in her chair, and Arcturus with his bow.

And later, when we have departed to our resting places, we hear the clock in the hall ticking with such a heavy stroke that it seems like a great pulse throbbing through the house. From the brick hearth pipes a shrill, nervous chirp, for a black-coated little cricket is doing his best to bring us pleasant dreams. Less cheery is the faint tick of the death-watch behind the head-board, and the hoarse, dolorous serenades that proceed from the frog-pond hard by. But, despite them all, sweet slumber comes to us at last.

As we write, we forget all other houses, and seem to be sitting on a certain low stoop at evening, sniffing the honeysuckles in bloom above us, and looking away, over fields sweet with white-weed and clover, and across a strip of blue waves, to the steepled city beyond. A faint sound of bells ringing within those slender towers floats to us across the bay. Long may it be before the beloved grandmother shall welcome us no longer from that open door, and the gate of the dear old homestead be closed against us for ever by a stranger's hand!

XX.

THE QUEEN OF HOME.

AMONG all the jeremiades that we hear delivered upon the degeneracy of modern days, there is none more frequent or more bitter than the lament over the loss of housekeeping abilities among women. So highly do men eulogize the domestic arrangements under which they spent their happy youth, so keenly do they expose the jars and deficiencies of the present system, that one would think that the art of good housekeeping perished with our grandmothers, and that their descendants were unworthy to compare with them in every thing that concerns the care and management of a home. And the feminine world, worn and jaded with their daily duties, consider the marvels that were wrought by the matrons of that golden age, — the yards of cloth they wove in their stout looms, the skeins of yarn they spun, the stockings they knit, the quilts they sewed, the cheeses they made, the butter they churned, and can only murmur in wonder, "There were giantesses in those days." With machines to lighten

every labor, they succeed in accomplishing but one half as much; with a library of cook-books, and a course of lessons from Professor Blot, they can produce no viands to haunt the memory like the dishes of those ancestral boards.

Why a fish weighed nothing when dropped into water puzzled many wise men, until one was daring enough to weigh him, when he found the assertion false. It is always well to be sure of a fact before attempting to account for it; and we are not certain that the housekeepers of other days, all things considered, were able to effect more than is possible at the present time. Those who dwelt in country towns, presiding over the economy of their great farm-houses, performed many illustrious labors; but they were also spared many duties which occupy their successors. The world without made no inroads upon their time, and few interruptions disturbed the even tenor of their employments. There was no open house to be kept swept and garnished for constant use; for in one wide kitchen all their avocations were performed. There they received their visitors, if any came; but the gossiping caller did not expect to disturb the regular whirr of their spinning-wheels. Fashion's tyrannical sway never invaded their domain; garments were made of the stoutest cloth; and, once made, were allowed to wear out without

change. The sewing necessary for their families was but one quarter what the same number of people require at the present day. The thousand and one little ornaments and conveniences which make our homes attractive, and the manufacture and care of which consume so much time, were then all unknown. Books were few, and newspapers were rarely seen; so that no leisure was needed for their perusal. We remember dimly that the cookery was delicious, but forget that we ate it with the eager appetite of childhood. Time, like space, softens all outlines, and wraps every thing in the roseate hues of distance. It is thus that we look back upon those old-fashioned mansions, and regret their happy, well-ordered cheer; but, compared with the numberless elegancies and comforts of our modern dwellings, they would seem barren of attractions, and the life which satisfied their inmates narrow and intolerable. The women who ruled their domestic affairs so famously would fail to meet the demands of our present society; and they will be seen to have possessed but few of the excellences which must belong in future to the mistress of a model home.

Even the good housekeeper of to-day is too often lacking in a proper estimate of the value and influence of her work. When she has fed and clothed and housed the family intrusted to her

care she believes her mission fulfilled. While ministering to their immediate needs, she scarcely realizes that she is laying the foundation of that bodily health or disease, which is to render them either happy or wretched for life, and to form a lasting inheritance for their children. So, according to the tradition of the feminine elders, she makes her beds before breakfast, airs her rooms when convenient, stews acid sauces in tins, and serves up larded pies for dessert. In failing to cultivate in the minds of her children a love and appreciation of beauty, by means of pictures, books, and her own cultured discourse, she does not see that she is denying them a source of the highest pleasure, and rendering their characters hard, cold, and sordid.

But she believes in the great virtue of cleanliness; her floors are kept spotless, her windows glitter to passers-by, and her mahogany is resplendent from frequent rubbing. She rejoices in her name and fame as a housekeeper. Neighbors come to her for the receipts of her puddings; her ginger-snaps are famous, her pickles and jellies the wonder of her friends.

To preserve this reputation, however, she is ready to sacrifice the ease and comfort of all about her. Children, with their innate love of chaos and misrule, behold her arrangements with dismay. She

may not meet them at the door to pin towels around their boots, as poor Tom Tulliver found himself treated when he went to visit his respected aunt, but they feel that when they cross her threshold they become straightway a plague and a pestilence. There is no frolic for them in the hall, for the mats will be left askew; no peeping from the windows, lest their fingers touch the glass; no playing hide-and-seek behind chairs and tables, for every article of furniture has its set abiding-place, from which it is never to be moved by unauthorized hands. The little prisoners, finding that the wildest kind of hilarity attainable within doors is to sit on the edge of remote chairs, making signs to each other and watching developments, after the manner of Joe Gargery and Pip, soon escape to the boundless freedom without, and return only when hunger and night drive them home. Thus, rather than encourage games and sports at their own firesides, lest they might dislocate the chairs and raise a dust from the carpets, these mothers allow their sons to wander idly about the streets, where liberty is found and, with it, numberless temptations to wrong; and that they may preserve their parlor curtains from any taint of smoke, they allow these sons, when older grown, to seek any questionable society where cigars are not contraband. And yet the homes

they leave may contain for them no sharp reproofs; nothing, indeed, but the smiles and welcome of one who loves them fondly; but the rigor of the regulations needs to be enforced by no spoken command.

Thus, while the good housewife of to-day has virtues that we all recognize, she can never serve as a model for the ideal housewife of the future. That time will demand a higher type of the home priestess than this. It will realize more and more how important in the State are wisely ordered homes; and its matrons, retaining all the thrifty virtues of their predecessors, shall ennoble and increase them by the highest intelligence.

It may be easy to draw a pretty sketch of the domestic millennium, but how, it will be asked, are such results to be achieved? What is to transform women from the hard-working, harassed housekeepers of the present day into happy queens, reigning in the midst of order and quiet, and blessing all about them?

The first and most important step toward effecting this result would be to confer upon women a more thorough and liberal education. Instruction in mere chemistry and physiology is not sufficient; the training required must strike its roots deeper than that. Half knowledge is worse than ignorance, for it is too arrogant to follow, and not wise

enough to lead; but full knowledge sees all things in their true proportions, and controls them with a moderate hand. The most intelligent mind is the best fitted to fill any station, even the lowest. And it will not despise it; for the widest culture must recognize the value of labor, and acknowledge it as the blessing, and not the curse, of the human race. When culture and labor shall work together, life will be rid of its blunders; and these make one half of the unhappiness of the world. In the late war, our citizens were all the better soldiers that they knew how to construct bridges, build boats, and repair engines, and even to write thrilling accounts of the battles they were fighting. A mind well trained in any one thing is the better fitted to accomplish any other. Dr. Johnson was surprised that Mrs. Carter, who translated Greek so well, could also hem a handkerchief as neatly; but we do not doubt that a thorough knowledge of any language will lead one to sweep a floor better than she could without it. The girls whose perfect demonstrations of Euclid at school eclipsed the rambling logic of their companions, are the very ones whose housekeeping now puts that of all others to shame. And among our acquaintance, the ladies whose ready thoughts and varied knowledge make their conversation a charm, and who give hours each day to the study of

French and German with their children, are found to rule their households with the wisest sway, and to dispense the most genial hospitality in their well-ordered homes.

We hear a great deal about the noble duties of the wife and mother, and the far-reaching influence which she exerts in her peculiar sphere; but to discharge these noble duties well, no corresponding range of instruction is thought necessary. Instinct is supposed to be sufficient for such demands; and the being from whom all men inherit their strength of body and tone of mind, who holds in her control the bent of their powers, and the foundation of their moral and spiritual life, is the only one to whom they deny the benefit of their highest education. Not until our country sees the necessity of the greatest possible intelligence in its women, for their own sakes, and as the most valuable of its citizens, can we hope for any thorough reforms in our social economy.

The establishment of high schools for girls has been a feature of the past thirty years; and this has already exerted an important influence in elevating the life of woman, and in making her talents available to herself and the world. They will effect a much greater work when the mothers possessing wealth and influence in our larger cities learn to honor as they ought our public school system, and

to consider it the crowning and peculiar glory of the republic, rather than a means of instruction offered to the poorer classes as a gracious charity. When they discover that not only their sons must avail themselves of its systematic training and liberal endowments, if they would obtain the best education of their time, but that even their daughters cannot afford to despise the advantages it confers, we may look for discipline of mind and habits of serious thought, in place of those frivolous accomplishments and that muddle of disconnected facts and foreign phrases which have too often comprised the instruction furnished to girls by our irresponsible private schools.

Still higher schools must be opened to woman, and freedom given her to pursue every branch of study. Though the guardians of New England colleges have not ceased assuring the young ladies who come there pleading for admission, that such learning is too difficult for them, and that they had better return to their painting and embroidery, the bolts have been heard to fly back from the gates of the great universities of Michigan and New York; and these guardians know that soon they must find themselves as helpless to withstand the incoming tide of progress as Canute was to drive back the sea. Soon they will comprehend the wisdom of to-day, which says, since woman is half

the world, half the world should be hers; and to prepare her for her work, the community shall be bound to furnish her with the highest general culture and the most thorough special training that it can provide.

Technical schools ought likewise to be established, where not only the trades and industrial occupations, but all the varied arts employed in our homes, may be thoroughly taught, both by lectures and experiments. When the young lady can as readily and pleasantly acquaint herself with any branch of domestic economy as she now does with the German language or English literature, our knowledge of housekeeping will consist of something more than a farrago of arbitrary rules, handed down by tradition from mother to daughter through years of ignorance, and modified neither by the discoveries of chemical science nor the mechanical improvements of to-day.

But this extension of knowledge must be a slow process. How, meanwhile, are the pressing burdens of household labor to be lightened? Philanthropy claims that eight hours' toil is all that should be demanded of our workmen, and that the remaining time should be allowed them for improvement and rest; but the majority of sober matrons daily give to their families fourteen hours of conscientious, loving work; and yet they com-

plain of failures and annoyances which they cannot remedy.

The prospect of deliverance by means of a supply of more competent servants is but slight. If China could send across the Pacific a race of female domestics, teachable and contented, no one would care how many thousands she poured upon our shores. The foreigners who still form our sole reliance dismay us with their hopeless ignorance, and we are yet completely at their mercy. As domestic service is now established, it is idle to blame our own countrywomen for preferring any means of livelihood to this. It offers them comfortable homes, regular work, and good wages; and when they choose starvation prices for sewing in cities, and much harder labor in Lawrence mills, we may be sure they have strong reasons for their choice. To enter another's household, as a paid assistant, they must surrender all control of their time; they like regular hours for work, and after that to be their own mistresses; but in this position they are never released from waiting upon orders. There can be no exact specification of the duties they will be required to perform; and their happiness must constantly depend upon the humor and the demands of another, with whom they are allowed no equality; and freedom and equality sound like American

birthrights. In country towns, where they are treated like members of the family, where they have their seat at the common table, and spend their evenings in the sitting-room, they have no objections to the work: but country towns do not ask for their help; and the cities that do, have other ideas of what is right and proper from their office and station. At this form of the doctrine of caste their thoroughly democratic minds rebel; and though this may be our national idea carried to an absurd excess, it is useless to attempt to reason it away.

Deliverance must come, then, from a different source, if it come at all. Perhaps some feasible plan of co-operative housekeeping is to lift the burden from weary shoulders, and allow time for other work besides the mere elemental processes of cooking, washing and sewing, which may be better done in combinations, by professional hands. Perhaps machines for lessening labor will be improved and multiplied, so that what now requires two hours for its performance can be done in one. They have already accomplished much, and no one doubts that this is a mere tithe of what they are destined to achieve.

We can never despair of the future; and we must believe that from one or all of these sources, or from others which we cannot now discern, help

will come in time to our over-worked matrons, so that all the complicated machinery of domestic life may move along without jar or friction. When any serious evil is known to exist, and earnest minds set to work to devise means for its removal, they seldom fail to discover a way.

In that happy hereafter, it will be found possible for the queen of the household to preside with sweet serenity over the little realm whose subjects are so dependent upon her guidance for their present and future happiness. No comforts that bless our homes to-day shall then be lost; and all others shall be added that love and knowledge can devise.

The coming housewife will keep her dwelling daintily clean, for the sake of health as well as beauty. Its walls will be neat and stainless; but no green traceries upon paper-hangings shall impregnate the air with floating arsenic. No fresh paint, emitting poisonous exhalations, shall be needed on the woodwork; for the varied graining of unvarnished woods will only grow richer and more beautiful with age. Fastened carpets of wool will be cast out as abominations, vile receptacles of dirt which housemaids are powerless to remove; and over polished inlaid floors shall extend soft, heavy mats, whose dust may be given to the breeze each day. The heavy curtain-dra-

peries that make our parlors no better than dungeons will be banished to limbo, and the blinds swung open to sunlight and air. The walls of this model home will be overhung with immortal dreams of the artist's brain; for culture will have taught its mistress that the beautiful is always useful. Her table may glitter with crystal and burnished silver, but she will administer no daily poisons from her board. We question whether pastry and cake shall ever receive honor there; but ripe fruits from many climes shall furnish the dessert, and good humor and pleasant converse render the hour a delight.

Method and regularity shall simplify her cares; and each day she will make leisure for her own improvement, both for her own sake and for those in whose progress she will feel so deep an interest. Not only the physical, but the mental and moral training of her children shall be under her watchful guidance. The conversation will not exclude her from a share if it happens to glance toward abstract matters and those of national import; and beyond her own narrow circle, she will have a vital interest in the spread of goodness, sincerity, and benevolence among mankind.

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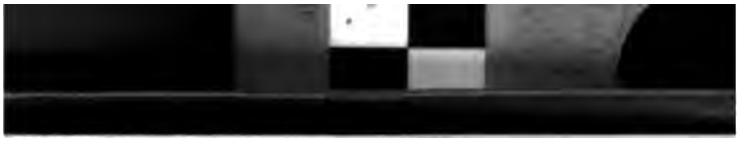

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